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OUR TOWN;

OR,

ROUGH SKETCHES

OF

CHARACTER, MANNERS, &c.

BY PEREGRINE REEDPEN.

"Your tales of men and manners, facts, home facts,
Have you of these, sir?"

"I'm familiar with them."

"Oh! wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! Oh! brave new world,
That has such people in 't!"

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1834.

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OUR TOWN.

THE POACHER.

"The d—l knew not what he did when he made men politic; he crossed himself by it —"

MAN is a curious compound. His ways are covered, his means are incalculable, his end is rottenness. He can do strange things, and the mode of doing them is stranger. But to what account does he turn them when done? What does it amount to if he make the best of them? One spends his whole life, from infancy to manhood, in learning to dance on a rope — a sport for children of various sizes. Another, through the same long course of years, bends every faculty, and stretches

every power of ingenuity, that he may be able to perform sundry evolutions on a horse at a gallop. He arrives at perfection, his amazing dexterity excites breathless admiration, but what is it when it is done? What steadiness of nerve, what precision of eye, what regularity of movement are required to accomplish all this with the skill and grace which these heroes display! How much toil, anxiety, and suffering must be experienced ere the professor arrives at the summit of his hopes! And yet all seems to be done with ease. The difficulty was in the beginning. If any one think there was none, let him go to "Astley's," and try a step at a gallop. If he break his neck, his opinion will fall with him, and let him blame the latter and not the horse, as bad riders usually do.

By constant practice and unwearied assiduity, accompanied by the loss of the best years of one's life, such skill may be attained. We see it once, and are amazed; the repetition would disgust. What then has the man gained? Swift said, with more keenness perhaps

than elegance, that "the same spirits which in their superior progress would conquer a kingdom, would in their descent conclude in a"—something very disagreeable. It is the same with talents. The riders and rope-dancers might but for a perversion of abilities, have been celebrated for skill in nobler employments. The patience, dexterity, and perseverance of the poacher might have made him a superior man. The same qualities united to his daring, and aided by other qualifications which difference of circumstances would have drawn forth, might have raised him to the rank of a general. With an army for his dogs, and an enemy for his coveys, his ambush would have been his net, and ten to one he had drawn them into it. It is the misdirection of means which varies the end; and but for that, what might not man become?

Walk with me, reader, a short distance up this narrow, back street, in our dull market-town, just round this corner, where fifty dirty and ragged children are grouping together in search of the amusements they like best. There

they are — how employed none can tell, but employed they are, and that is enough both for them and us. Some are throwing stones, some knocking about a bung with a stick, some erecting a heap of the dirt in which they thrive, some pulling the hair of the weaker ones, some pulling a dog by the tail, and by the ears, as if they meant to tear the animal in half, all shouting, whooping, dancing, and jumping, for dear life. It is a picture of human nature, divested of some of its darker images. Thoughtlessness, unmeaning mirth, vain, indefinite objects, the strong annoying the weak, are things by no means rare among “children of a larger growth.”

But see, they have all left off, to stare at us. Even the dog's tail is relinquished, and the sly-looking urchin, that held it, opens his eyes and mouth as if he had never seen a stranger before. Away flies the poor cur between the legs of the multitude, who are all too much taken up with us to note him. Thank our stars we took this road. We have given the

dog a respite, and that is something. It is a good act unintentionally done. Many deeds for which men get credit are of the same description. There, too, are the heads of the mothers of this ragged troop, in soiled caps and dishevelled locks, thrust out to view us; a hundred speculations are floating in their brains as to our object in taking this road, which, as soon as we pass, will find ample utterance. Now they begin, gabble, gabble; come on quickly, and let us get out of the din of tongues. It is difficult for a man to pass through the world without creating some noise in it.

Now then, here is the abode of the poacher. Look through the cracked panes of that patched casement, and you behold him diligently plying his needle, with all the seeming industry of a man who gets his subsistence by his daily employment. From morn to night, there he sits, with his sinewy and thin, though strong and wiry legs across, his hose ungartered, his unnameables unbuttoned at the knees, apparently never suffering his attention to wander a

moment from the garment before him, but in reality devising new schemes for outwitting the keepers, and cheating the magistrates. One would think now, and more than nine-tenths of the town think, that he is only occupied mentally and bodily on the old coat lying on his lap. No such thing. "Old Lot," for that is his usual cognomen, is perhaps at this moment in imagination "sniggling" a hare. See he works with more energy, the needle flies through the napless cloth with the rapidity of an arrow, while every jerk of his nervous arm, as he pulls it through, threatens to dislodge him and his frail "board" together. Now his head moves with increased vigour, his hand clutches the coat with eagerness, away goes the needle faster than ever, and he laughs, he has puss now, safe enough—see, he pricks his finger, the vision is dispelled. His finger feelingly points out his mistake, and he raises his head with a mortified air, his shrewd time-and-weather-worn countenance keenly expresses his feelings: "*I thought I had her,*" he exclaims; but he sees us, recovers himself, and with a

civil nod, intended as a bow, he resumes his employment.

“Good morning ! Lot. What did you *think* you had ?”

The tailor replies with much simplicity, “I was only speaking to the child there, sir ; that was all.”

“Oh ! that was all. Well, Lot, I want the pockets of my shooting-jacket repaired, will you fetch it presently ?”

His eyes sparkle with much interest. “Yes, surely, sir. You ’ve had good sport lately, sir, I allows*.”

“Not much of that, Lot. It is chiefly worn by the flask. Poachers spoil all the sport now.”

“Ah ! sir, they be sad fellows, they poachers, they let nothing be. ’Tis a pity the keepers can’t get hold on ’em.”

“It is, Lot, a great pity. Do you know any of them ?”

“Lord love ee, sir, there’s none in this neighbourhood. They come from a distance.”

“I have a friend who wishes to get a few

* The common idiom of our town.

days shooting, do you know where there is any game to be found?"

"Who! I, sir?" (with well affected astonishment and simplicity,) "No *that* I doan't. I *did* hear of a hare up in Farmer Hatch's grounds, but 'twas months ago, 'fore the end o' last season, and I forget who told me now. Ye see, sir, poor people that has their living to get, like me, can't go out much to see about game, and if we could, it's like some o' the gentry would be jealous."

Here a scratching at the back-door is heard, and the tailor exclaims, "Lie down there, puppy, ye shall have yer dinner presently." But the puppy won't lie down, and in it comes, in the shape of a well-grown white bitch of a very suspicious breed, with an eye like her master's, dark, piercing, and cunning, and a head and shoulders that bear the marks of a thousand encounters with the bushes.

"That's a fine bitch seemingly, Lot. Is she good for anything?"

"Nothing at all, sir, not she; good for nothing but a bone, as we say."

“ Did you ever try her ? ”

“ Oh ! no, sir, *I* didn't ; but the man as left her did, but she wouldn't face the thorns.”

“ She looks as if she wouldn't.”

Something in the expression of this sentence induces the tailor to continue. “ She's the biggest cur ever was see'd. My cat there scratched her all over, as you see, sir, and she never offered to bite her, only run away, that's all. The man as 'longs to her is gone up the country for a few days ; I wish he'd come and fetch her.”

“ Well, Lot, you'll come for the jacket ? Good morning.”

“ Good morning, sir, and thank ye.”

And so ends our colloquy. Now we will just walk a few yards, and you will see him out looking after us ; for he is suspicious of the opinion of strangers like yourself, reader, and will watch us, lest we should return and perchance see the rest of his pack. That white bitch, which he calls “ puppy,” is the acknowledged best dog in the county for hare, pheas-

sant, or rabbit; but he decries her merits to conceal his own propensities, and, if we go out of hearing, will repay her "untoward" intrusion with sundry kicks, but he will wait until he thinks the yelps will not be heard. In order to save the Dame blanche, therefore, we will take two or three turns about the street, by which time his anger will have subsided; for he is a good-natured creature at bottom, notwithstanding his propensities to poaching.

Ah! there is our old friend at the door. Mark his clean, active, and well-made limbs. Every sinew is like twisted cat-gut. Not an ounce of superfluous flesh could be found upon him if he were scraped. His figure may be termed slight, but it is hardy, tough, and enduring. His activity is great, and his strength superior. His address and dexterity are wonderful. He will wriggle his way through a quickset-hedge like a whip-snake, and crouch amid a heap of fallen leaves in a copse like an Indian, while the booby keeper runs first one way, then another, looking in every place but the right. I have often uttered imprecations

against poachers when I have had reason to believe they had anticipated me in my sport, but that sly "Old Lot" has redeemed the whole race in my estimation. I would not have him prosecuted for a world of game, guns, dogs, and all. But there is no fear of that. Neither sportsmen nor keepers in this part of the country have brains enough to catch him; and if they had, they would not be very eager to get into his clutches. Their heads would ache for it if they did.

Observe his features. Long, thin, sharp, shrewd, and cunning. Slyness and craft are depicted in every line and furrow. The good-humoured smile playing about his lips shows his kindness of nature, and, to "give the old one his due," he has a better stock of it than many of those who pass for better men. His deep-set eye and overhanging brow denote sagacity and determination; and his Roman nose and wide-spreading nostrils evince a little sensuality. And these indications are fully borne out by his habits. It must not be supposed that Lot is a drunkard—no, no, but

he likes his "pint" for all that. His forehead has depth, but not great breadth; and his grey—somewhat iron-grey hairs, cut close to his head and combed straight down, give sedateness and simplicity to his features.

There he stands in his flannel-jacket, just glancing at us over, not through, his spectacles; for, to say the truth, I believe he sees better and farther without them; they are, I suspect, only assumed to give him the advantage of a venerable appearance. How upright he stands! how jocularly he addresses all who pass him! now patting one boy on the head, now shaking another by the hand—encouraging all, and never forgetting for an instant the poor little helpless cripple, his grandson, to whose wants and necessities a mother could not be more attentive.

That man is seventy years of age, and there are many in the parish of thirty who are not equal to him in manhood. How he contrives to work as he does all day, and to be out rambling all night, nobody can tell. He never sleeps, that's certain, or, if he does, it is with

his eyes open and his needle going. Had Lot no other avocation than his trade, his regularity and industry would be a pattern to the whole place. He has been known to continue hard at work all day, to leave his board at dark, and professedly retire to bed. The same night he has been seen on the road, ten or twelve miles from his home, in the direction of Mr. B.'s plantation; he has been observed with a bag of game ready for the coach, which passes within two miles of his abode, and at six o'clock in the morning was on his board for the day as if nothing had happened, only complaining, perhaps, that the dogs in the town barked so that he could not "get a wink of sleep."

The persons who thus see him so punctually at labour cannot conceive it possible that any man of his years can or will endure such intense fatigue; and thus he goes on unsuspected and uninterrupted, and will go on to the end of the chapter. I have sometimes thought it never could come to that. Lot does not look like a dying man. He is an evergreen, and one cannot look at his hardy frame, with a knowledge of what he has

done and still does, and have the least dread of his final exit. Only one thing could kill him, and that would settle him in six months or less—namely, the repeal of the game-laws. I told him once, by way of experiment, that it was in contemplation to repeal them, and that henceforth game would be public property. I repented the experiment sincerely, for it had well nigh killed him on the spot. The shears dropped from his hand, and he remained for some moments with his harsh features fixed as if his jaw had been locked. Horror, amazement, rage, and mortification, seemed to be all depicted in his countenance at once. However, he relieved himself, as soon as he recovered his speech, by a superabundance of vituperation, intermixed with expletive, to which, *en passant*, he is liable. He concluded by praying for the resurrection of Guy Fawkes, that he might blow up both houses of parliament, and more than half-threatened to take a dark lantern and do it himself.

Then there were such meetings and assemblages of the poaching fraternity; for several

days the little room of the Wheatsheaf was thronged. Such discussions, such denunciations, such resolutions! the like was never heard before. Lot even sent to the dealer in London to whom his spoils are consigned for sale, to desire that the earliest intelligence of the contemplated alterations in the game-laws might be forwarded to him express; and his long-legged, sallow-faced, and hollow-eyed son, who follows in the steps of his worthy progenitor in poaching only, was despatched to — to glean information.

Then the mistake was discovered, and such glee — such triumph was manifested! The whole herd of poachers, far and near, congregated together and had a dinner on the occasion, as gentlemen in England usually do on every occasion, and the “best home-brewed” flowed plenteously. Lot was in the chair, and even he departed from his usual custom, and got gloriously elevated. Luckily for me, the abolition of the game-laws had been advocated by some member, and thus my intention to hoax the nimble-footed tailor was never sus-

pected, a circumstance which probably saved me a glazier's bill and sundry other inconveniences. As it was, I had the credit of giving the earliest information; and since then "Old Lot" has repaired the fractures which "Time, the worker of all good," has caused in my garments, with great despatch and on very moderate terms. Indeed, I am one of his favourites, though it might be questioned if I should remain so if he knew the liberties I am now taking with him.

One or two anecdotes of this illustrious personage may not be out of place here. Some time ago, towards the close of the month of October, a medical gentleman, who was returning from a late visit to one of his patients, was driving his gig in a road which separates two plantations belonging to the estate called "Dace Court." It was moonlight, and objects on the open road were distinguishable at a considerable distance; but in this spot all was rendered gloomy and indistinct by the tall trees and high hedges on each side. A slight rustling noise was made in the hedge on the left, which was a quickset planted

on a lofty bank. The doctor's horse started, and nearly deposited his master in the ditch on the opposite side. Speculations as to footpads and other agreeable surprises now floated in the doctor's brain ; but, after a moment's reflection, he concluded it might be either a hare or a pheasant that made the noise.

He therefore listened awhile. The rustling continued, but it was less violent than at first. Continue, however, it did, and every moment the doctor expected to see a hare come down the bank, and "take along the road." No such thing. A long, dark object cautiously moved itself through a small aperture in the hedge, and went down the bank ; but it was so long that it seemed to have no end, and the road was so dark that it could not be seen clearly. It went on wriggling and twisting, and dragging its slow length along, till the foremost part of it reached the road. "What can it be?" thought the doctor. It did not look like anything human, and it could not be a ghost, it made too much noise for that. Was it a wild beast escaped from an itinerant mena-

gerie? That was the most probable; but, whatever it was, to the doctor it was a non-descript.

His pistols were now drawn out, and cocked, ready to bring the supposed wild beast down, when one end gradually raised itself, and with the same caution brought itself to its full altitude, and there stood "Old Lot," the tailor, two yards high and a little more. The doctor replaced his pistols, and sat quietly to see the *denouement*.

Skipping along like a tall ape, away bounded the tailor down the road a few yards, till he came to a gate, where the keeper and his assistant, who had pursued him, stood stretching their necks to get a sight of the fugitive.

"Oh! you're there," said the keeper.

"Yes," said Old Lot, with his usual impudence, "and you're *there*, and had better keep there, too."

Now, everybody knows that a keeper can fight upon his own manor if he cannot anywhere else, and thus to beard the lion in his den was too much.

“Why had I better keep here?” asked the keeper, indignantly, for his wrath was great.

“Because ye may chance to fall down if ye come this side the gate,” said the audacious tailor.

“We’ll see that,” rejoined the other, and over he went, gun and all; but no sooner had he got within the reach of Lot’s long arm, than a blow from his “piece of holly,” as he calls it, gave the keeper a fall, sure enough.

“There now,” said the tailor to his prostrate foe — “ye wouldn’t take a fool’s advice; I told ye as how ye might chance to fall down!”

While he was thus speaking, the under-keeper went to rescue his superior, and to capture the poacher. Vain man, he little knew the arm he had to encounter. The “piece of holly” soon settled his business, and, leaving them to console each other, Lot returned to the copse, and taking a nearer direction across the fields, towards the house, marched off triumphantly with the spoil he had previously collected.

The son of Galen assisted the keepers up, and

in a short time they returned to the lodge, ignorant of their assailant. The doctor knew the poacher well-enough, but he would not betray him, and drove on a mile or two, when he saw the tailor taking immense strides with a sack on his back. No recognition took place, the tailor shunned a meeting, but the next morning a basket of game was found in the doctor's stable. How it got there the doctor *knew* not, but he *suspected*, and not liking the idea of being bribed to secrecy, though he fully meant to observe it, he repaired to "Old Lot," who was at work, as usual, as if nothing had happened.

"You have sent me some game, Lot," said the doctor, "and I wish you to take it back again."

"Who ! I, sir, Lord love 'ee, I hav'n't *seen* any these two years ago. Can 'ee please to tell me, sir, what's good for a cold and the rheumatiz ? I was so bad all last night that I couldn't sleep a bit, though I was in bed by nine o'clock, and didn't get up till just afore six this morning."

After this matchless specimen of impudence, there was nothing left the doctor but to prescribe, and keep the game, which he did, and never wanted any from that period afterwards, though other people could not get a head in the parish.

Lot's depredations on a certain manor had been so numerous and daring, that the proprietor was most anxious to discover the perpetrator, and his keeper was strictly enjoined to use every means, possible and impossible, to secure him. In short, so imperative were the commands issued to the guardian of the furred and feathered tribes, that, had the Lord of the manor been a Turkish bashaw, he would probably have said — "Bring me the man or thy head shall answer for it."

The keeper, a stout, athletic, blustering fellow, was resolved to do his best to maintain his honour and keep his place. He went down to the public houses and threatened and boasted, till everybody was in hourly expectation of seeing the poacher bound hand and foot, or of hearing that he had been eaten alive by the keeper.

Everybody thought the keeper a most redoubtable fellow, and he was feared and courted by all, but "Old Lot."—He laughed. "He! he! he!" was all that ever escaped him when the terrific threats of the man of the gun were named in his presence.

At length came the tug of war. "Old Lot" had made a good use of his time in the earlier part of one cold, wet night, in November, and was about to leave the preserves with his booty, when the keeper, who was on the look-out, espied him. Lot could run better than the keeper or any one else, but he scorned it. Fighting was the order of the day. He laid down his bag, and grasped his "piece of holly." The keeper had nearly blown himself in the pursuit, but he glanced contemptuously on the spare figure of the tailor as contrasted with his own herculean frame, and looked defiance.

"I've got you at last," said he.

"Have 'ee?" asked the saucy tailor: "Well then, 'ee needn't be in a hurry—take your breath, my good man."

"You 're my prisoner, and if you move I'll shoot you."

"He! he! he!" said the tailor,— "Who is moving?"

"You 're my prisoner," repeated the keeper.

Again was the provoking laugh, the "he! he! he!" uttered, and "I don't believe 'ee, my good man."

"I'll soon show you," was the answer, and the butt end of the keeper's fowling-piece was raised to decide the tailor's fate, but he stepped aside dextrously, avoided the intended blow, and, ere the keeper was aware of it, the "piece of holly" had ended the matter.

Lot, who had been fully prepared for this rencontre, now took a rope which he had brought with him and securely fastened the luckless keeper to a tree, where he left him to the enjoyment of as miserable a night as possibly could be experienced.

It was late the next day, when the man was discovered, and he accounted for his defeat by stating that "a *body* of poachers, *seven in number*, had attacked him unexpectedly." This

story thus spread was universally believed, for nobody deemed it practicable for less than that number to master the Ajax who had fallen. The ire of the owner of the estate was excited to a degree of fury. He threatened the extinction of the entire race of poachers, and the neighbouring gentry promptly united with him to destroy such a desperate band. Rewards were offered for their apprehension, with a free pardon to any one of the party who would betray the remainder. All the county was in agitation, and nothing could be heard of but the terrible attack on Mr. P—'s keeper. Blacksmiths let their iron cool, and dairy-maids let their butter spoil, while they listened to the direful narrative. But no discovery was made. The keeper recovered from his cold, and recounted the particulars of the conflict in a manner that raised his prowess several degrees in the estimation of his auditors, and thus all was well. New assistants had been hired, and the preserves were doubly guarded all round the county, as nobody could tell where the murderous horde would go to next.

Meantime the affair was in some measure forgotten, poaching went on as usual, and even the wrath of Mr. P—— had cooled. Then came the finale. With one of the bills which had been posted, offering the reward for the apprehension of the “band,” and his long-legged son as a witness, Old Lot presented himself early one morning at the hall-door of Mr. P——, and requested to see “the ’squire.” Everybody knew “Old Lot the *tailor*,” but no one knew “Old Lot the *poacher*,” so that he gained an easy admittance, and a jug of home-brewed in the kitchen to begin with. He reserved the nature of his mission for the ears of “the ’squire,” and when shown into the great oak-wainscoted parlour, he respectfully made known that he could give information of the party that had so cruelly ill-used the keeper, provided the reward was guaranteed him, and that he should be held harmless in any *subsequent* measures that might be taken.” The ’squire’s heart leaped with joy, and his face glowed with triumph and vengeance in perspective.

To make the matter as brief as may be, we will only say that the most unqualified conditions as to Lot's safety and reward were, in the excitement of the moment, subscribed to. The keeper was then sent for. He was asked by the tailor if he could identify the "party" who had assailed him. He replied "No, for they had crape over their faces."

"Like this, d'ye mean, my good man?" asked the unblushing tailor, putting on his hat, which had a piece of crape sewn on the inside, to drop over his face as occasion required. The keeper was dismayed. He could not speak for very shame, as he saw clearly that all his boastings would be disproved. The 'squire wondered.

"What is the meaning of all this?" asked he.

"It's soon told," replied Lot, and he revealed the truth. The surprise and indignation of the 'squire may be conceived. But he loved a joke, and could not forbear a laugh at the quiet quiz which the keeper underwent from Lot, upon his brave resistance to such a large party, and enjoyed the crest-fallen looks

of his Ajax, as well as the shrewdness of the tailor. "Old Lot" gained the reward, and promised that he would never poach upon that manor again—a promise which he kept in all good faith, for he is a man of his word on every occasion. The poor keeper hid "his diminished head," and soon left the county. To be beaten by a tailor was too much for him.

"Old Lot" is now living in "single-blessedness. He had a wife, who, like the rib of Lot of yore, was a salt one. She was the salt of tartar, and like that preparation was, as her bereft husband says, chiefly useful in scouring. For some thirty years she scolded, and fumed, and fought, as a virago should—now, with her husband, then with her children; and when amusement grew scarce at home, she sought it among her neighbours, who came in for their share of her volubility. In fact she kept the whole street in hot water. She died at length, it is thought of a fit of silence, having an ulcer on her tongue, occasioned, as was said by her acquaintance, by incessant use of that member. His loss was great, but Lot was not utterly

inconsolable. With much philosophy he contented himself by reflecting that things might have been worse. The neighbours were not sorry for her removal. They followed her to the grave, merely to see if she would lie quiet ; a fact which they doubt to this day. If a noise is heard in the church-yard, they flatly declare it is " Old Lot's " wife quarrelling with the worms, and the shrill screaming of the northern blast, as it whistles through the turret of the steeple, is said to be her voice in alt, abusing the rooks.

This good lady left behind her several children, only one of whom is now at home with her sire. We will not say much of her. She is, with the exception of being a fury, and having a partiality for ardent spirits and the army, a very worthy character. However, these little peculiarities do not destroy the serenity of Lot, who, finding it vain to attempt restraining her propensities, in which she obstinately persists, lets her take her own course ; for, as he says, " a pig will go into his sty if you do not drive him, but if you do he'll go everywhere but

where he should, and mayhap run between your legs, and throw ye down; and who knows but she may mend after all?" It is true nobody *knows*, but many people have a shrewd *guess*, that mending is out of the question. But she is good to the poor little helpless child, the offspring of one of her sisters, and that is much. Were it her own, it could not be treated with more careful solicitude, and the chances are a thousand to one it would not receive half as much. It is now three years old, a perfect cripple in body, but a shrewd urchin notwithstanding. If he had the use of his limbs, he would be a poacher, that's certain; as it is, he employs himself on the shop-board with his grandsire. While the latter is mending one hole, he is making two.

Monkey as he is, and no monkey can be more mischievous, "Old Lot" loves him with that peculiar strength of affection, which in men of his years is often seen, when the feelings of regard are concentrated upon one object. And the boy loves him too, more than anything but mischief.

Second to this imp in the affections of "Old Lot," stands the white lady before alluded to, who is his constant companion in his marauding excursions, and undergoes as many transformations in her exterior as a smuggler's vessel in the course of a season. Lest she should be known by any of the conservative party, she is occasionally painted, and although she is now as white as a lily, will probably at night-fall figure as a liver-coloured animal. Last night she was black, and I have sometimes seen her spotted of various hues, and always in such guise that her own mother could not distinguish her. The slut understands all this well, and whenever she sees the mixture of colour and size, runs up to be painted with as much satisfaction as any other lady could manifest on a similar occasion. The natural hue, however, becomes her best, as indeed I believe it would most of her sex, if they could only think so.

Sometimes she figures as a poodle, for Lot has procured a skin which he has had dressed, and ties upon her with much ingenuity; and

as nobody ever suspected a poodle of having a nose for game, she skirts the plantations without observation. Her own tail has been cut off, as you see, close, and when she assumes the French garb, the tufted tail of the late proprietor of her disguise having a wire through it, stands as erect as could be wished. The dog really looks not amiss in this dress, and was once fallen in love with by a lady, who most earnestly begged Lot to dispose of her. He hesitated, but the sum offered was great, and he could not resist the temptation. Blame him not. Other men have been overcome by beauty and gold as well as he, and after all it was but punishing an idle folly.

The dog was sold. Lot received the price, and requested leave to fasten up the animal in an outhouse, lest she should follow him or run away. He did so, and adroitly returned to the place soon afterwards, put the skin in his pocket, cut the rope, and away bounded *la dame blanche* over the fence after her master. Of course the "poodle" had run away, and it was unfortunate — "very unlucky, indeed,"

Lot said, "but it could not be helped;" and the lady, after advertising, and grieving, as is usual on such occasions, gave the matter up. While she remained in this world, the disguise was laid aside; but she is gone to that bourne from whence she will not return to claim her purchase, and the white lady now resumes her curls. People wonder how Lot gets so many dogs. He "can't help it," he says—"dogs will follow him." But how does he lose them so soon? He "can't help it—dogs will run away."

Like all persons who are enthusiastically attached to one pursuit, Lot has many anecdotes to relate to those who are not suspected of being likely to betray him. I am one of these—that is, now and then, when I get him to mend or patch, and give him an extra glass. Sportsmen's anecdotes are generally marvellous, and Lot's "recollections" are "passing strange." That they are *founded* in fact, I believe; but the facts are commonly, at least so far as I could trace them, so small, that the foundation of his tale, as compared with the

tale itself, is like that which would be required for one of the Egyptian pyramids, if the point were turned downwards. One absolutely wonders how he can raise such an erection, and make it keep its position on so small a basis. It is the triumph of human ingenuity — the maximum of skill. Colonel T—— never could have run with “Old Lot” in the race of lying. He would have been distanced. Like all liars, Lot believes himself: his faith is unbounded in all that he relates, and, like all liars, he disbelieves everybody else. If you tell him you have killed a hare, he’ll give you credit for shooting a rabbit. If you say you have “killed right and left,” he believes you have fired into a covey on the ground, and shot two birds. In short, the man who could make him believe anything, could discover the longitude.

Lot delights in getting hold of a raw sportsman. It is the salt of life to him. To show him *where there is game* — to take him to the most “*likely places*” — that, next to poaching, is his joy. He dragged a collegian three days through places where mortal man never before

went after game, till he had tired him to death, and ended by making him shoot his own brown spaniel, which the arch-tailor persuaded him was a hare running in the high "sedge and spear" on a morass, where the son of Alma Mater was up to his knees in mire.

"There, sir, *there* she goes—a *pretty* shot—can't miss it, sir: never seed such a pretty shot in my life!"

"Where?—where?"

"Why there, sir—don't you *see*?"

"No: where is it you mean?"

"Why *there*, sir. Ah! she's gone *now*. It's a *pity* you didn't see her—such a pretty shot as 'twas!"

Now all this time the "poor cretur," as Lot styles his victim, believes there *was* a hare; the tailor ejaculates his "He, he, he!" and leads him on another chace equally profitable.

Lot has a strong sense of the beautiful in scenery. His disquisitions on this subject, although in homely language, have much of poetry in them, and show that a taste for the

varieties and beauties of nature is implanted within his breast. Indeed, notwithstanding what he now is, he would have been a superior man had he been in earlier life placed in different circumstances. As it is, he is a tailor by day and a poacher by night, and he has done more to elevate the two pursuits, in my opinion, than ever man did before. Were all tailors like him, they would no longer be the mere fractions of humanity. It would take nine ordinary men to make one tailor such as "Old Lot." Talk of nerves—when was he nervous? What could make him blench or start? A bench of magistrates (and that is no trifle to a poacher) and the whole *posse comitatus* could not do it, not even with — gaol in the background. He has no fear before his eyes. He has none of your weaknesses or disgusts — no misgivings or tremblings. He would thrust his long, bony hand into the jaws of a mad dog; and while other people were running all over the town for stones and pitchforks, the foaming cur would be hanged, and, ten to one, skinned into the bargain — for Lot is fond of

fur. He will jump into a river to hug an otter, and a clever otter it would be to get out of his grip. Snakes and vipers are mere playthings to him ; he would put them between his teeth, and shake them with as much composure and mirth as a child would shake its coral and bells.

“ Old Lot” can do what no tailor ever could do, he can *ride*, ay, and *ride well* too. With one of those mile-in-length legs on each side of his carcase, show me the horse that could dislodge him. Even farmer White’s old donky, the most kicksey animal of his kicksey race, could not throw him, though he tried for an hour, at least. It was a trial of skill, betting pounds to shillings against the tailor. “ Old Lot” seated himself, and “ he ! he ! he’d !” in great glee at the donky’s efforts. The animal worked till his coat was dripping with perspiration, a thing unknown in the annals of donkyism till then, but it was of no use. Although the same beast had thrown a serjeant’s guard of light dragoons not a week before, the tailor laughed and sat still, till, finding all attempts fruitless, like Sinbad the sailor with the

old man of the mountains on his shoulders, the donky went on peaceably and lost his reputation. He died soon afterwards; people said it was of a broken heart, caused by his discomfiture; and, if donkies have hearts, I have no doubt of it.

Lot certainly must have the organ of locality, and Mr. De Ville would do well for the cause of phrenology to take a cast of his cranium. There is not a piece of ground, a copse, a hedge-row, a pond, ditch, fence, or gate, that he does not know, and cannot well describe, for "fifty miles round." What an admirable geographer he would have made! For paths he has no relish, they are out of his way. He makes his own. "Every man his own road-maker," is Lot's motto, or one of his mottos. He has no notion of following the steps of others, and nobody ever thinks of following his, so that he keeps his course to himself.

Notwithstanding all the peculiarities which characterise "Old Lot," he has no vanity,—no personal vanity, I mean. He knows his own merits in the way of strength and agility, but

he does not presume upon them—not a bit. It is his boast that he never *begins* a quarrel, nor does he, but if one is begun by any one else, let him alone to *finish* it. As his wife had the last *word*, so he takes care to have the last *blow*. He says he should never become but two situations—the coffin and the gibbet. I hope he has no presentiment of the “something after death,” when he names the last of these places of exhibition. The course of his life is pretty even, and the placidity of his temper is proverbial; but if a keeper should be rash, who knows what temptation may do? Let us hope not. He will never leave off poaching, that’s clear, unless the keepers should give him a sort of *carte blanche*, and then all his zest for the sport would be destroyed. It is only the love of opposition that induces him to carry it on. Let the men force their game laws, and no man’s manor will be secure from “Old Lot,” till he comes to that end which is the lot of all.

In that little hovel which is dignified with the title of “Lot’s *house*,” has he passed his days these forty years (where he has passed

his nights is another matter); and there, as he says, will he stop till his career is ended. It is thought by his neighbours he is rich, possibly he has a hoard, but it cannot be great. Lot is no miser. Much of that which he takes from the rich he gives to the poor, and many little offices of kindness and charity does he perform to the sick and aged. Proportioned to his means, he does as much or more good than any of those in our Town who rank high in the world's estimation for benevolence. But he has not the virtue of ostentation. He knows not the tact of keeping a crowd at his door waiting for his mite. He is even so thriftless of reputation, that he will convey personally his gifts in the most quiet manner. Foolish man! if he gave away only one guinea in a year to supply winter clothing and coals to the poor, he would have his name in print, and would save pounds.

The "better sort of people" manage these affairs differently. They do not run about in holes and corners, prying into everybody's wants, and lessening their necessities in secret;

they give their money boldly, and let every one see and hear what they do. When they give a guinea they talk large, and look mighty, — the poor old poacher sneaks along with his aid, as if he feared his next-door neighbour should hear of it. He ought to know better, he has lived long enough, but some people never profit by experience. So ignorant and careless is he of the proper mode of doing things, that if you were to tell him how other folks do them, he would only “he! he! he!” and go on in his own way.

The rector gives about five pounds out of more than twice as many hundreds in a year, and he sees that he does so; printed bills, and newspapers convince him and all the world of it. He is a “good man.” Stupid “Old Lot!” —but what can one expect from a poacher?

“THE TEMPLE OF HOPE.”

“He was a young man who was not blessed with much wit, and therefore conceived a wife was not the best thing he could take”

Anon.

FROM the street that crosses the two streets and the lane that run parallel with each other, as before observed, there proceeds a steep, narrow lane, leading directly to the gate of the churchyard. At the top of this lane, on the right-hand side, and facing the church-door, is the building which has received the nickname of “The Temple of Hope.” Passing through the churchyard, that is, if you were going *into* the town, the first object that would meet your eye would be, “nine times out of ten,” the fair tenant of the aforesaid “temple,” Miss Ambrosiana Rosebelle, who there fixes herself at one of the windows every leisure hour, to

catch the eyes and win the admiration of passengers. She may be said to be the presiding angel of our burial-ground; nothing goes on there of which she is not cognisant, from the “love-whisperings” breathed beneath the tall lime-trees that grow along its sides to the cawings of the rooks that inhabit them. A worm could not pop his head above ground to enjoy a mouthful of fresh air or a passing shower, but this lady would see and report his movements. She would probably order him back again to his earthly dwelling, for she assumes the sovereignty of the dominion of the churchyard, and will not be argued out of it either by churchwardens, curate, or rector.

Miss Ambrosiana Rosebelle has the vilest temper and breath of any being in the creation; the anaconda itself, with all its pestilential vapours, could scarcely be a more dreadful object to approach than this tall spinster. At a large party of grown children, who contrived to pass away the time they spent together by playing at forfeits, the virgin was ordered to be kissed by the “little doctor,” who marched up to her lofty form with the gallant air of a bantam, in

blissful ignorance of that which was to come. Poor little fellow ! he paid dearly enough for his temerity. It was playing at forfeits with a vengeance ! He declared many times afterwards, that all his stock of ipecacuanha could not have produced the dreadful revolution in his internals that this horrid salute created. He was conveyed home, and took to his bed. Recovery was hardly to be expected. It was thought he never would have risen again, had not the virgin intimated to his better half that she was so concerned at his (to her) unaccountable illness, that she really must call and see him. The little doctor left his bed, and started to —, where he underwent a course of sea-bathing.

Touching the temper of a lady is a tender point. It should be handled with great delicacy. We will merge it in a general question ; to be personal might be rude. Well, then, reader, didst thou ever know any mortal creature, man, woman, or child, that had really a *good* temper ? If so, you have the advantage. Every body has heard scores of people rail against bad tempers and all who possess them,

but they only illustrate the observation about “Satan rebuking sin.” Who has not heard many persons praised for having *good* tempers? but they had their own points nevertheless. Those who revile bad tempers generally have them, and speak feelingly. Those who are called amiable have some forbearance and more tact. Show me a man that was never in a passion, and what will I show you?

There may be good tempers, to be sure. You, courteous reader, say decidedly there are; we will not dispute, but rely upon it yours is not an example. Nothing personal is meant, of course. Although you have now the lustre of good-nature spread over your fine features, benevolence in your beaming eyes, and the sweetest of sweet smiles upon your lips, depend upon it there is a little tartar about you. And you may further depend that, if there were not, your other qualities would be “wishy-washy”—mere milk and water. If sincere, and that I am sure you are, you will admit this. It would be useless to deny it. *You* might not choose to remember all the pranks

you have played from the hour of your birth ; but your poor mother and your unfortunate nurse will never forget your squallings. They will remember how you threw your vile self backwards, till they feared your back might be broken ; how you held your breath till you were as black in the face as the ace of spades ; how you threw your pap over the hand that put it into your mouth in the vain hope to silence your ravings ; how you tore your caps, kicked and screamed when you were washed, as if you revelled in dirt and hated to be clean ; how you made your father cross, your mother nervous, and your nurse wish you at the antipodes : all this they will remember, in spite of you, to their last moments.

How often has your mother, kind-hearted woman, fancied you had a pain in your stomach when you have disturbed the whole house ! How often has she, good creature, in her solicitude, made the nurse unfasten your clothes and take all the pins out ! Confound you ! as if you always had a pin in your back or a pain in your stomach. But it was all the

same; whether you had or not, cry you would, and you know it. You had no consideration for those about you. Do you forget how you stamped, and tore, and bellowed, in the days of your short frocks? How often you have been “put in a corner,” with a chair before you, which your little foot has tried to kick down? How you have thrown that little body of yours upon the carpet, and kicked, and sprawled, and roared, as if you wished to deafen everybody, while your parent, with a face as red as your own, and your nurse, with fingers itching to slap you, have tried every means to compose you, and have even filled your distended jaws with sugar to no purpose? How many pots of currant-jelly have been wasted upon you to keep you quiet?—How many times have you pinched and scratched your brothers and sisters? How often have you torn the unhappy kitten nearly in half, or tried your best to pull out her tail by the roots? Tell me that! and you talk of temper, forsooth!

Have you never clung to the leg of a table,

or to the banisters, when they wanted to carry you to bed, after having been stunned by your noise for ten or twelve hours? Have you never stood sulky and sullen, with a book in your hand, whilst your teacher has been trying an hour in vain to get a word out of you? Have you never dug your rascally knuckles into the nose of one of your schoolfellows for a marble? Did you never needlessly quarrel with the girl that dearly loved you, and whose heart was pierced by your unkindness, to gratify your temper and show your power? Did you never make your wife miserable, and afraid to look at you? Did you never thump your child for the tricks you have often performed yourself, eh? Tell me that, or refer me to those who have known you and watched your progress.

All this and more you have done, it is likely, but you are silent and charitable when dear self is concerned. Tell you the same things of another, and what will you say then? You will be virtuously indignant, and justly severe. You will try to deceive yourself, and "thank God you have never done the like." But there

are those you cannot deceive, and before whom you could not, for very shame, deny it. If of the male part of the community, you have done all that has been described; if of the "softer sex," you have done as much only in a different way. Who has not done it? who is there better than others, though all court the reputation of being so? Better confess the truth, that others may profit (and may be ourselves if we are not too far gone) by the exposure of our faults.

To return from the subject of temper to the lady, may now be necessary. Having, therefore, received the assurance that you, gentle reader, are not offended with our freedom, which assurance is conveyed in one of the blindest smiles that ever played upon human lips, we are the happiest of scribblers, and proceed.

Miss Ambrosiana Rosebelle is the daughter of a manufacturer of small beer, on a small scale, in a small town in a neighbouring county. It was remarked that this worthy brewer was very strenuous in his efforts to prevent intoxication. So great a regard had he

for the morals and health of his customers that, it is thought, he took more than ordinary pains to preserve them. Certain it is that his beer had very aperient qualities. However, the good man had his enemies. The chemist of the town, in particular, was very hostile to him, because he could not dispose of his salts. The brewer, he said, had ruined his trade, for people who drank his beer had no occasion for them. A barrel of "genuine Epsom" remained on his hands for years, and this, on his part, gave rise to much enmity.

The chemist circulated a report that unfair means were used in the concoction of the beer, and said that the brewer bought up and used all the damaged malt and hops from the dealers all round the county. For a time the brewer and his beer were in extreme bad odour. Lucky it was for him that he had friends as well as enemies. The apothecary of the town owed much of his prosperity to the beverage which the chemist decried. The son of Galen loudly praised the beer, and denied the report. The chemist reasserted publicly

that "all the malt used by the brewer was damaged." The apothecary was a staunch friend, and not to be easily beaten. He made a bold stroke at once, and silenced the chemist for ever. He averred that to his own knowledge there was no malt at all in the beer—he offered to take his oath of it. He was not required. Everybody believed his word.

At length the brewer died, it is thought of his own "thin potations." He left "the plant," &c. to his eldest son, who declared that he should brew on a new principle, that is, that he should use malt, and his neighbours say he does—a little. This gentleman rides a broken-kneed horse, and thinks well of himself. His sisters also think well of him; they view him as the representative of the Rosebelle family, and they address him — "T. Rosebelle, Esquire." The youngest of these ladies is Miss Ambrosiana, our spinster. She was early taught to "teach the young idea how to shoot," and took possession of the "temple of Hope" on the retirement of a very worthy lady, of eccentric habits, who had established, and con-

ducted for a long series of years, a school for young ladies therein. The term school, however, was not sufficiently grand for our heroine, who instantly had the board repainted, and the more sounding title of "*seminary* for young ladies" placed thereupon.

Miss Rosebelle was now absolute empress of some two dozen miserable little girls, over whom she ruled with a rod of—birch. Her form of government was despotic. Rewards were scarce, punishment, or, as the lady herself terms it, *poonishment*—abundant. Every second Monday, a half-witted fellow who dwells in the forest, and obtains a living by making brooms, rush-mats, &c. may be seen going up to "the temple of Hope," with a fresh supply of birch-rods, which, since Miss Rosebelle came to this place have been a staple article of commerce with him. He makes very significant gesticulations, and eyes the bundle of rods curiously, at the same time casting a sly look at the servant-maid who opens the door, while he informs her he has brought "something for the young ladies."

Indeed the "young ladies" have but a poor time of it; their lot is a melancholy one. They never do right, and herein they differ from their governess, who never does wrong. Be it remarked that we are giving *her* opinion of both parties. Her pupils are very perverse, they "provoke her to such a degree," and "so ungrateful too." They make her wofully unhappy, for she has a touch of sentiment, and more than a touch of sensibility. She scolds, coaxes, raves, flogs — all to no manner of purpose. She finds the children just as wilful as ever. Then she takes it to heart, and cries, "she is so hurt." From tears she rises into a towering passion, storms till she almost disturbs the dead in the church-yard, gets finally into the heroics, and faints. The last operation is performed very carefully, it may be said to be done "*secundum artem*." Before she "goes off" it has been remarked that she very prudently looks round to see if any one is near to support her. If not she either defers the operation till somebody comes to her assistance, or gives due notice that such aid is

required. Then she “goes off,” indeed, in a gallant style, and the pupils go off too, in a titter at the absurdity.

Schoolmasters and schoolmistresses are, it must be confessed, a queer order of beings. They seem to be gifted with more than an ordinary share of the frailties of human nature. This perhaps arises from the heterogeneous mass of people who commence that trade when all others have failed. Every booby who cannot keep a shop thinks he can keep a school ; every decayed sempstress, who cannot form a dress to fit the body, thinks she is capable of forming the mind. They take houses, buy a few forms, issue some hundreds of circulars, the substance of which each copies from the other with some slight alterations, and they begin. There must be some fools in all communities, and amongst the brainless these adventurers find support. How they end most people know. The unhappy urchins are birched, and crowned with fools’ caps, for a due length of time, and are turned out as “ finished ;” and finished they are, sure enough.

Miss Rosebelle, although engaged in the education of youth, has found time for some numerous flirtations. Indeed she seems to have had a sharp eye upon the "main business of a woman's life," as it has been termed, matrimony, in all her actions. She looks upon marriage as the *summum bonum* of existence, and has made violent efforts to attain it. But thereby hangs a tale. A certain old gentleman living a few miles off had a son. There was a little property and a lackbrain youth to be caught by somebody, and why not by Ambrosiana Rosebelle as well as by another? It was true the property was not large in itself, and report said it was largely mortgaged, but the father was a magistrate, and could not live for ever. The son might be a magistrate too; that would be something. The office gives dignity and influence, and anything will do for a magistrate in the country that can sit in an arm chair and look solemn. The son could look as solemn as most empty-headed people, and why not in a court of justice? She re-

solved at once it should be so, and “ set her cap ” at him.

The poor fellow was sadly frightened. He hung back, and was provokingly shy. The lady tried to coax him towards her, as people try to coax a stray dog that they wish to appropriate to themselves. She was mighty fond of him, but “ the course of true love never did run smooth.” The fondness was not reciprocal, and she had tact enough to perceive it. Like an able general in the field, she took another position. She attacked the parents by a flank movement, still keeping the centre engaged with the son. How fond she was of them is passing strange. She coaxed, flattered, and wheedled, by turns, and persuaded them they were far more than they, good people, had ever supposed themselves before. She told them how kind they were, how good they were, and above all, how clever they were. The last assertion settled the business.

Miss Rosebelle had made a discovery, and she obtained due credit for it. True it was

that nobody besides herself ever found out that the old people were clever — but what then? Columbus was the first who found out the method of making eggs stand upright, a thing believed impossible till he had done it. Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood, and all who heard of it called him a madman. It was clear that Miss Rosebelle was a genius. She had made an original discovery of that which was never suspected to exist before, and now people ridiculed her as they had ridiculed Harvey. The magistrate and his wife made a discovery in their turn. They could not do without her. It was wonderful how they had contrived to live until they knew her ! Till that happy event, existence had been a blank — a fair sheet of paper unwritten upon. They were now scarcely ever apart. Ambrosiana neglected her school to visit them, and to receive them at "the temple of Hope," and all her vacations were regularly passed with them. The more they saw of each other, the more they liked each other's society, and the more grateful were they for the felicitous acquaintance they had made.

Miss Rosebelle was now happy; her plan had succeeded. She had but to win over the young man to the same way of thinking as she had so readily brought his parents, and all would be well. That was not so easy. She could not exactly make love to him—that would be a sacrifice of virgin modesty; and he, stupid dolt that he was! would not make love to her. What was to be done? She took to sighing frequently in the presence of the parents, abstained from animal food, and drank vinegar to make herself thin and pale. She affected to start when the young man came into the room, and she looked unutterable things when he left it. She talked frequently of blighted hope, unrequited love, and broken hearts. Still the old folks, clever as she had said they were, could not see her attachment. It was very distressing. She cursed their stupidity, but could not help it. What was to be done she could not tell; she was “driven to her wit’s end,” and, short as the journey was, it fatigued her.

As a last resource, she had a fit of down-

right illness, and took to her bed. The old lady visited her, and tenderly inquired the nature of her complaint, but could obtain no answer. The patient sighed, and unfastened the flood-gates of her soul. A copious rush of tears puzzled the old lady entirely. The good, simple-hearted creature, in her own singleness of purpose, had never imagined that the court paid to her was only a push at her son, nor did she think so then. One thing only was clear to her—Miss Rosebelle was crying, and she must be crying for *something*. What was it? She asked again and again. Ambrosiana declared it was a secret sorrow that must slumber within her own breast until its corrosive violence should lay her in her *cold* grave.

It is singular that when people of the sentimental cast are inclined to bewail the necessity of ultimately taking up their abode in a grave, one of the most pathetic of their laments is, that it should be a *cold* one. Would any of these lovers of bathos like to be put into an oven, or have their graves warmed by a steam-apparatus? Either of these things might be

accomplished if it would make them more comfortable, and surely their friends would not cruelly refuse to provide them with a warm resting-place after their departure from this life. Care should be taken by these worthies, themselves, that their place of sojourn after death is not likely to be too warm.

The thought of poor Miss Rosebelle going into a "cold grave" was peculiarly dreadful to the magistrate's lady. She could not bear to part with her friend, it would be a serious loss to herself and husband. When Ambrosiana was gone, who would think and say they were clever people? It must be prevented, if possible. The old lady intreated and implored, the young lady was overpowered by her own modesty. "Go to the cold grave" she must, for she could not reveal her secret. At length the kind-hearted lady did work upon her young friend, notwithstanding her extreme bashfulness. She confessed that her heart was lost, and that the magistrate in embryo was the fortunate holder of the prize.

The old lady was delighted. She had such

a sweet opportunity of saving the life of her young friend, and save it she would. She returned home on the wings of eagerness, to prevail upon the father and son to comply with all that was necessary to preserve the existence of the discoverer of their merits. The former consented at once, the latter rebelled. "He saw no reason why he should marry Miss Rosebelle because she had told his parents they were very clever people, an assertion which he thought he had every day, and that day in particular, fresh reason to doubt. He liked to behave with all due respect to his father and mother; but he wouldn't marry Miss Rosebelle, he'd see them both hanged first."

But who can withstand the importunities of woman? If young, and pretty, we all know how they are resisted. If old, and plain, we are glad to consent to be freed from annoyance. Miss Rosebelle was neither pretty nor very young; but she sighed so incessantly, and his mother preached so indefatigably, that the poor young man was harassed out of his life. When the ambrosial sighs of his fair tormentor

were wafted over the table towards him, they spoiled his appetite. Home was very irksome, but he had not spirit to go anywhere else. In sheer despair he consented to the match. He never smiled afterwards, and when he had taken some weeks to consider the matter, finding that the day was fixed for his sacrifice at the altar, to which like a tame lamb they intended to lead him, unless something decisive were determined upon, he adopted a course that put the matter finally at rest. There were two evils, he made choice of that which he thought the least — he died.

Miss Rosebelle grieved astonishingly. She wore "weeds," and affected all the gloom of the deepest melancholy. The world had no charms for her, she had lost her *all*. Her earthly happiness had been destroyed ere yet it had budded. She wished not to live. The grave, cold though it was, and that was a very disagreeable thought in winter, the *cold* grave should be her bridal bed. She would be united to her dear departed one in death, if not in life. Her friends viewed the forlorn mourner with

all compassion. It was so shocking to "die of a broken heart," and she declared every hour that her heart *was* broken, so that nobody could doubt it. The parents of the young man who had so impatiently departed this life were constant in their endeavours to assuage her sorrows. Long laboured they in vain. The good old lady told Ambrosiana they would adopt her as their own—they had lost their only child, and she should fill his place, and enjoy the property that would have been his. There was something so *touching* in this proof of their affection that Miss Rosebelle resolved not to be outdone in generosity. Rather would she disappoint herself of a romantic death, and live to oblige her friends. Putting off her *entrée* into the "cold grave" was no doubt a great sacrifice to one of her sensibility, and the good people were the more obliged. The broken heart was, therefore, mended. The fracture was soldered up, and riveted to make it more secure, and the member was as sound as ever.

Nobody can grieve for ever. People grow

tired of woe as well as other things. So did Miss Rosebelle. She began to look quite happy, to oblige her friends of course, and she became a greater necessary than ever to the comfort of the old lady and gentleman. The latter could not do without her at all, they were almost inseparable. Felicity dawned again on the fair Ambrosiana. She determined to enjoy it; how, indeed, could she do otherwise? it would be so ungrateful to her friends if she appeared unhappy. Thus things went on for some time. Months and years passed away in uninterrupted affection and harmony. All people thought the property of the old folks would be left to our heroine, who had long made up her own opinion on the same subject. Her good fortune created her the envy of all her neighbours, and they said many things about her, not remarkable for good-nature.

Poor Miss Rosebelle! she was extremely unfortunate, it must be owned, and much to be pitied. She seems doomed to nothing but disappointments. The cup of happiness was

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scarcely at her lips when it was rudely snatched away, and dashed to pieces at her feet. The magistrate's lady grew *jealous*, yes, indeed, horrible to relate, she grew downright furiously jealous of poor Miss Rosebelle. She had *seen*, and *heard*, she said, much between Ambrosiana and her husband which had long surprised her. Suspicion grew out of surprise, suspicion begat certainty, and certainty was the parent of fury. After a dreadful storm fury subsided into coldness. They compromised the matter between themselves, to prevent the world from knowing any more about it. They seldom met, and then with constrained civility. Was ever any person so unlucky as our heroine? If the old lady *should* chance to wing her way to the realms of bliss, then indeed—but she is very tough, it can hardly be anticipated for some years. Poor Miss Ambrosiana Rosebelle !

Since her discomfiture by the old lady, our preceptress of the fair part of the creation belonging to our town, and elsewhere, has continued her occupation with greater assiduity,

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that is to say, so far as regards increasing the number of her pupils. Their improvement is another thing. So that they make a tolerable show when they go to church on Sundays, dance tolerably well at the “break-up,” and do not eat too much, she lets them alone to improve themselves. While the magistrate’s property was in the back-ground, it was immaterial to her whether the school succeeded or not; but since that has been struck out of the picture altogether, it has become necessary to adopt some means of acquiring property of her own.

Since the “love-affair,” as it is here generally termed, her health has, as might have been expected, become very delicate, and she has discovered that she is “really quite unequal to the fatigues of the school-room.” The management of the young ladies is, therefore, delegated to assistants. Not so the superintendence of their masticatory operations. That is our heroine’s peculiar duty, and she performs it with scrupulous punctuality. It is her great care that the children shall not be helped too

often at meal-times. She has an eye to prevention in this matter, which, as we all know, is better than cure. Those who have the most ravenous appetites she contrives to find fault with just before dinner, and flogs them to make them temperate in their desires. She sometimes changes her plan, and becomes all of a sudden extremely kind to them a few minutes before the refecton is served up. She kisses them over and over again. The latter mode, experience has proved to be a most effectual preventive of gluttony; and the apothecary to the establishment, our “ head doctor,” is called in, who pronounces them bilious, and recommends a spare diet. The doctor knows the manœuvres of the damsel, and does all in his power to make her happy, like a benevolent man as he is.

Amongst the miserable inmates of this establishment are some girls from India, the daughters of a M. D. resident in that land of heat, who, to fill up his leisure hours, has had that gentlemanly essential, a mistress—one of the “ half caste.” These offsprings of illicit

love are much prized by the worthy doctor, who is very wealthy, very old, and exceedingly bilious. He is expected to arrive in this country at no distant period, and as it is known that he intends to pass the remainder of his days in the quiet enjoyment of his rupees, the calculating spinster has hopes of him. It *will* be unfortunate if she fail this time in her speculation, after *all* the pains she has taken to succeed. She has been two years alternately kissing and flogging the girls, to make them call her "mamma," and to mention her as their "dear mamma" in their half-yearly letters to their papa. The children comply to avoid either extremity.

Perhaps the doctor may take the hint. At all events, Miss Rosebelle is in great spirits. She has begged that he will make "the temple of Hope" his "home," when he arrives in his native land. She hints to her intimates that she may be the mother-in-law to the swarthy little creatures, who, to speak of them as they deserve, seem to be a very ungrateful set, for they do not appear to anticipate the event

as likely to be any addition to their felicity. The sensibility of this lady is deeply wounded by their "want of gratitude," and she often pathetically deplores the "poor return" she meets for "*all* her kindness." After a copious flood of tears, she has recourse to the rod again, but "*all* she can do is utterly thrown away upon them, they have no sensibility."

One of these children is a particular annoyance to our tall heroine. The girl is young and foolish, and does not know what is good for her. She does not wish for a mother-in-law, and she also laughs when the schoolmistress faints. So often has she repeated the last offence, that the sight of her white teeth is dreadful to the sensitive nerves of the lady, who rewards her titterings with scourges till the screams of the sufferer annoy the neighbourhood, and the birch is tinged crimson. But it is of no use. The girl will neither be beaten into love, nor blindness to the awkward fits of her governess. Poor Miss Rosebelle declares in despair that she "does not know *what* to do with her." You may conceive,

courteous reader, the hardship of our heroine's life from the above detail. Only think how dreadful it is that she cannot even “faint” in comfort, but is obliged to leave off in the middle of a most interesting fit to “poonish” the impertinent girl who laughs at her “distressing situation.”

There is the fair lady at the window, looking pale, melancholy, and as interesting as she can. Her sharp features, and her hollow eye will not allow her to look good-tempered, or she would, you may depend upon it, for when she takes her station at that window it is to be as fascinating as possible. She has a book, and see, she sighs. She has an eye upon us; reader, is your heart susceptible? She hath not “escaped being tall and thin,” in truth she is a skeleton of great longitude. Her thin lips, and sharp nose bespeak the Zantippe, and there is a sinister cast in her small, deep-seated eyes, that is not exactly pleasing. She constantly appears as if endeavouring to make out a long list of “extras” to tack on a “school-bill.” Ambrosiana sits remarkably upright,

and ever and anon, if you observe her closely, you will see her draw back her head to the utmost extent of that long neck, at the same time pursing up her mouth into all manner of wrinkles, and applying her taper fingers at the top of the bone of her stays, and pulling it down with great energy, as if determined to be upright in spite of herself.

She observes us looking at her, and, as elegantly as possible, she reclines her cheek upon her hand, *à la Juliet*, and looks at her book, not to read, for her eyes are cunningly cast sideways towards us every moment, to see if we are observing her, while she attitudinizes. Poor Ambrosiana! No woman ever laboured harder for admiration and a husband. I could fervently pray for her ultimate success, if only for the sake of her amazing perseverance, but I do not like to wish any gentleman ill. "*Nil desperandum*," is her motto, and she acts up to it.

DELICATE PLEASURES FOR
SUSCEPTIBLE MINDS.

“Ruffian, let go that rude uncivil touch!”

HAVING journeyed so far together, my dear reader, I must be blind indeed if I had not long since discovered that you possess a most refined taste, great sensibility, and exquisite feelings—a person, in short, just after my own heart; therefore we will now go and see a pig killed.

It is the month of November; the weather is clear and frosty, just calculated for pig-killing and the subsequent operations. Pigs, you will understand, are killed first and “cured” afterwards, and warm weather is unfavourable to the remedial process. After Michaelmas a pig stands a poor chance. If he is

a lusty fellow, then it is ten to one that he does not live to enjoy the festivities of Christmas, though he may be called upon to subscribe thereunto. This is somewhat hard upon him, it must be admitted ; but pigs are philosophical animals, and do not trouble themselves about the future. They enjoy the present, which is as much as any of us can do ; and as to the finale—you know that is nothing when it is over. If the pigs do not think so, their proprietors do, which is pretty much the same thing.

In “our town” pig-rearing and pig-killing are the principal objects of a man’s life. The same may be said of our county. It seems as if man was born for no other purpose than to make hog’s flesh. The instant they are at liberty to act for themselves, they follow the example of their forefathers and cultivate bacon. A man takes his wife and his pig together, they flourish together, are nourished one as much as the other, and both go into the straw together. The difference in the last proceeding is somewhat striking, to be sure, and it can hardly be said whether the balance is in

favour of the woman or the pig. The former has, as everybody knows, no very easy time of it; the latter, when he gets into the straw, gets on his funeral-pile, in which his bristles, not his flesh, are burned to ashes. His troubles are over; but nobody knows where a wife's troubles will end. The pig has paid the debt of nature; but a wife has so many debts of nature to pay! The pig is the best off, after all.

The stoicism of a pig is enviable. The manner in which he *receives* the injuries heaped on him is no proof of it, certainly, but his mode of bearing them after they are inflicted is truly his own. No creature on earth can make more noise than he does to prevent himself from being hurt; but that is excellent policy. He seems to know the value of the old proverb, "It is better to prevent than to cure." But when he finds the thing is done, he is silent, and as patient as Job himself. Indeed, if Job had been allotted to bear what a pig bears, we might be permitted to doubt his patience. The trials of swine are great. Some foreigner, with

more sprightliness than justice, said that "a pig was the only gentleman in England." If the foreigner stood in the place of one, he would alter his opinion.

The swinish race are subjected to the most ungentlemanlike indignities. They are cruelly maimed, merely to increase their bulk, at least, no other reason is alleged. It does not impart melody to their voice, that is evident; and as to strength, it is not needed. You have only to tease one, to be convinced of its power. They have rings thrust into their tender noses, because they shall not root up the earth and grow thin by the exercise. But how admirably do they bear all this! No sooner is it over, than they turn about to the trough with a dignified composure, and feed as heartily as if nothing had happened.

The fair girl who has her ears pierced for the sake of adding to her beauty, as she and her friends foolishly fancy, does not bear the pain without murmuring. The pig, who has a profound contempt of ornament, and of everything that is useless, worthy of Diogenes himself,

disdains to complain. Although his very eyes are strained by the attraction of the iron in his snout, till he is in danger of squinting for the rest of his life, he heeds not the threatened deformity. With a grunt of contempt for his persecutors, he returns to the business of his life, to eat, and grieves not even at the risk of loss of beauty itself.

If a dog, set on by some mischievous urchin, slit one of his ears or amputate it, he calmly endures the loss of a member whose disfigurement or abstraction would be deemed by man as a blight upon his reputation. Even disgrace itself is nothing to a pig. Satisfied with himself, he is content with his own good opinion ; while man is wretched unless he live in the good opinion of the world. A pig has more reliance upon himself than half mankind. He trusts to his own powers. He is naturally independent—in short, he is a philosopher. Pigs should be revered ; and so they are when they are dead. We do not find out their merits till they are gone. Then it is we acknowledge their worth. People snarled at By-

ron when living ; but, now he is gone, they fear they shall never find such another. We abuse a pig when he is alive, as a wallower in filth—as one who disregards the decencies of life ; but when he goes the way of all pigs, we perceive his excellences, from the tender picking on his snout to the gristle of his tail, and are apprehensive that we shall never get such hams again.

I am a friend to pigs, and am not ashamed to own it. It is necessary they should have one friend in “our town,” for there everybody is their enemy. They are a persecuted and abused race. The very faith of hospitality, which even the wildest and most savage tribes observe, is here broken. The poor innocent pig is taken in, and fed by the treacherous hand of man, who, ogre-like, stands day by day looking on him with smiles and complacency, and welcomes him to his meal, which he takes, in the simplicity of his heart, without suspicion or fear ; and finally has a knife plunged into his throat by one he considered his best friend.

In shooting a hare or a pheasant, much may be said by way of excuse. They are strangers to us, and we to them. There is no breach of faith — no perversion of hospitality. But the pig is an old acquaintance. We have brought him up from his infancy — have coaxed him — chatted to him : he grunts with pleasurable recognition when he sees us ; we have accustomed him to receive benefits from our hands, which he repays with a life extorted from him in cold blood. Verily, the pig is an ill-used creature. It is said in justification, that the pig yields his life in return for the support he has received, but it does not hold good. The pig never made the bargain ; you never asked his consent ; but you make him die, whether he like it or not. You burn or scald the coat off his back, which you never put on ; and you consign him to a black, smoky chimney as a prey to which you may have recourse on every occasion. This, you say, is one of the “ rights of man : ” it is not right but might that does the pig’s business. But, however, we will go and see one killed, for all that.

The martyr that is now about to be sacrificed at the altar of gluttony is one of a very fine race. He is not of our genuine breed, for the pigs of our county are somewhat remarkable for lopping ears, long backs, and long legs, for which reason they are more difficult to make thoroughly fat. We therefore prefer a "cross in the breed," as the pig-jobbers say—a due mixture of our own blood with that of an adjoining county, and the Chinese, makes what the farmers call a very "pretty pig." They are celebrated for smallness of bone, a great essential in the opinion of those who are so fond of the meat. They are "short and close" in their make, and will easily fatten; and when they arrive at a certain pitch of obesity they do not eat much, which is also a matter of importance. They will carry from fourteen to twenty-five "score," when they are "fit for the knife;" or from two hundred and eighty to five hundred pounds of flesh, of which three-fourths, or four-fifths, are fat. We generally feed the young ones upon "good wash," or if that is not to be procured, "mid-

dling wash" thickened with pollard, and perhaps a few potatoes, or soaked malt-dust, or grains, besides which they have the refuse of the garden. This food is sufficient to make them grow well; then they have something better to make them "fill out"—an addition of potatoes, or "sharps," to every meal, besides a handful of peas or two "between whiles" for "snuggling." After this he has his food thickened with barley-meal, and finally he is "fatted off" with barley-meal just moistened with water till it makes a very thick paste. N. B. A pig fattened according to these directions will be as "pretty meat" as ever was "made." — Mem. Care should be taken that too much is not given the animal at a time. He should never have more than he can eat *directly*, so as to leave none standing in the trough; he should be fed regularly three times a-day.

The scene of the slaughter which we are about to witness is the back premises of "the abbey." Mr. Thryvewell is a great admirer of "well-fed meat," and an able connoisseur in pigs, and all that relates to them. The poul-

try-yard is managed solely by his wife, who will sometimes put in a disagreeable word or two concerning the porkers, but the old gentleman only laughs at her (when she is out of sight), and manages things pretty much in his own way. His bacon is the finest in our town. There is no doubt he could buy it for two-thirds of the price it costs him to "feed it," but that is nothing. Pig-feeding is his hobby, and his good lady observes, "what we feed ourselves we know is wholesome." And it is as wholesome as "pig-meat" can be, for it is fed on the best that can be given to a pig.

Pig-killing is a sort of jubilee for those who have it on their own premises. It is an event. We feel that we are men of substance and importance in the eyes of our townsmen, on that day at least. Everybody hears of it — the pig takes care of that; and if the pig happen to be a good one, and the strong beer is also good, it will stand a chance of being proclaimed all over the place that same night by the butcher, who never fails to promote your honour and glory by his bacchanalian shouts and rhodo-

montades. He will talk of it, too, the next day, for then he comes to "cut up" the defunct, and, as a matter of right, he has his second edition of strong beer and bread and cheese. Away he goes again sounding the trumpet of your fame, and everybody knows how great you are. Observe, that no man is or can be great in our town who does not make his own pork and bacon. Pig-feeding is greatness.

Mr. Thryvewell is evidently impatient for something. It is for the arrival of the renowned John Dobbs, the pig-killer. He is very punctual in general, and particularly with customers like Mr. T. for he is rather worldly-minded, and has a great respect for those who are "well to do." Something has detained him, however, and the old gentleman is growing fidgety. The time appointed is past, and he is eager for the sport to begin. He longs to know how many "score" there are. And there are others, too, as impatient as the proprietor. There are two or three women in eager attendance with bowls, for the old gentleman is charitable, and gives the "chit-

terlings," and the blood for "black-puddings," to the wives of his labourers. Some lookers-on, admirers of "delicate pleasures" like ourselves, reader, and two or three labourers and boys to assist in the coming slaughter, all impatient for the beginning, fill up the scene.

The principal object of the day's proceedings is in the fore-court of his sty, and is very restless. He is very hungry, too, not having had any food since yesterday morning, for it is considered bad management to feed a pig for twenty-four hours previous to his death. The only torture the animal cares for is heartlessly inflicted just before the close of his life. He is staring about in great surprise at the assemblage before him, and wonders what it means. Still more does he wonder why he is not fed. That is strange. He sees the old gentleman, and looks at him expressively, as if he intended to convey the touching question, "Do you mean me to be starved to death?" But he receives no answer. He grunts petulantly, smells to the empty trough, and turns away in an agony. He seems to be inwardly repeating the expressive lines of Southern—

“Could I forget
What I have been, I might the better bear
What I am destined to. I’m not the first
That has been wretched—but to think how much
I have been happier!”

The unhappy pig then runs into his sleeping-apartment, in which his bed lies all strewn about hither and thither by his tumblings and tossings of the last night, produced by his unusual fasting. He takes a melancholy look at the scene of his watchfulness, as if he deplored the disarrangement of the bed, and despaired of ever making it comfortable again. Poor fellow! he little knows that he has pressed his pillow for the last time! Then a certain sensation of pain, caused by the collapsing of his stomach, reminds him of the want of food. He squeaks his anguish. He takes up an ear of straw in his mouth, rejects it as having no nourishment, and runs out once more to the vessel which has so often afforded him a comfortable meal; but there is nothing in it. It is as empty as himself. He puts his nose under it, and tries to lift it up; he turns it over in a pet, and mounts his fore-feet upon it, to look over the rails of his sty. His piercing complaints

are loudly and pathetically uttered. •He looks once more towards his owner, with an expression that is pitiable, and would melt the heart of any one but a lover of bacon. But the old gentleman is used to it, if the pig is not, and cares about nothing at this moment except the tardiness of the butcher, against whom his wrath is waxing great.

All this time sundry speculations are made as to the probable weight of the animal when dead. This is always an important point, and sometimes gives rise to many wagers. The opinions on this occasion fluctuate between twenty and twenty-four score, a very respectable size even in "our town," where swine are known to reach thirty-five and forty score. But the old gentleman and his family say they have an objection to "great fat meat—it is apt to be strong." They are therefore contented with a mass of about four hundred weight of fat.

It is evident the owner has a wager on the subject of weight by his eagerness for the arrival of the pig-killer, whose *veto* is always a certain guide as to the number of pounds a pig carries. The "gammoning" sea-captain and

the chemical lieutenant have made a wager with him for a small amount, which they have predetermined to lose, in order to flatter the old gentleman, who will be induced to invite them to supper when the carcase is weighed, and perhaps to-night also, after the beast is killed. This is one of the modes which they adopt to please him; but the good old man never suspects that he owes his winnings to aught save his own superior judgment. He is thus kept in good humour, and his hangers-on in good quarters.

The two "sons of the *deep*" are now entering the gate. Mr. Thryvewell steps towards them as fast as sixteen stone and sixty-five years will permit him, and gives them a hearty welcome; after which he inquires, "Have you seen Dobbs?"

"He is coming," they answer, and his jolly face beams with pleasure.

"I say," observes the captain, "we shall win our wager. That pig can't weigh as much as you say. You see he does not look very large now he is empty; he is light inside, depend upon it—he will not weigh twenty score."

“Ha! ha! ha!” shouts the hearty old man, “I’m right enough, no fear—can’t tell me more than I know. Teach *me* to tell the weight of a pig, eh? What next, I wonder? Did you never think of teaching your mother to eat eggs?”

“I think you have lost,” says the lieutenant, gravely, “I do indeed, sir. Let me see—you said above one-and-twenty score, I think? He can’t weigh more than nineteen—d’ye think he does, captain?”

“Not so much—not so much by half a score. Depend on’t, we have won this time, though we lost on the last pig. You had better pay the money, and say no more about it.”

The old gentleman roars his laughter. “Who’d be fool then, I wonder? What signifies what you say? What do you know about pigs? I’ve fattened more than ever you saw, unless they were pigs of iron for ballast, and you couldn’t guess the weight of them; say no more—I’ll double the wager before John Dobbs there” (the butcher has just popped

his head round the gate-post) "can say a word."

"Oh! no," reply both—"we should be sorry to take money from an old friend, and we know you must lose. Here, Dobbs, how much does that pig weigh?"

All eyes are now turned towards the redoubtable John, the mortal scourge of pigs, and the "best guesser of weight" within fifty miles. John is tying on his apron while he surveys his victim. "Give him a huck there!" he cries to one of the labourers; "turn him round, and let 's see his hind-quarters—that 'll do. How much d'ye *think* he weighs, gennelmen? he's pretty heavy."

"I bet he's not twenty score," answer the captain and the lieutenant in a breath.

"I bet he's more!" calls out the owner at the top of his voice. "Am I right, John, or not?"

"Ees, sir, right enough, that ye be. Measter's right this time, and so a was last, and so a will be next time, please God! There's two-and-twenty score there, within five pounds."

The old gentleman laughs till he is overpowered by his own vehemence. He is in a paroxysm of triumphant pleasure. "Didn't I tell you you knew nothing about pigs?" he inquires, as soon as he has sufficient breath. "Ha! ha! ha!—teach me, indeed! I say, John Dobbs, they wanted to teach me the weight of a pig!"

"Ah! sir, there be few people who can do that," replies the politic butcher, who has an eye to the strong beer.

"I think so, John," rejoins the old gentleman, in a tone that forcibly conveys to his hearers "every one else must think so too." He runs off now as fast as possible, to gladden his wife and daughters with the intelligence that he has won his wager.

While he is absent we will take a brief survey of the butcher, who is the "*head pig-killer*" of "our town," and is deserving of some little notice. He stands unrivalled in his art, and he seems to know it. There are others in the place who destroy pigs occasionally; but John Dobbs says they only "murders 'em."

Certainly they are great bunglers, and not only make sad work of slaying, but terribly mangle the carcasses. They are not worthy to rival John Dobbs. He is about fifty-five or fifty-six years of age, wrinkled and furrowed in his face, black and profuse in beard, keen in his eye, low in his forehead, shaggy in eyebrows, and clean in his hands and dress. The latter is a sort of close jacket and "overalls" of white duck. I speak of the dress that is worn only on "kill-ing-days," for he has two occupations. Pig-killing is not a permanent employment, the summer puts an end to it, and Dobbs fills up the interim by aiding the "head-bricklayer" as a labourer. From the end of March to the end of September the pigs have a respite, unless it be a few porkers, young tender things about two score, and fit to roast,—these are sometimes seduced into plumpness, and "nipped in the bud" in the hottest weather. It is but seldom, however; for thus to destroy the swine in their infancy is generally regarded in our town as bad economy, for pigs of that age, if allowed to live, would thrive well upon

the produce of the garden, and by Michaelmas make good-sized hogs, "fit to put upon potatoes and meal."

The pig's time for rest is Dobbs's time for labour; he may then be seen carrying mortar, on a square board placed on his head, up a tall ladder, the smallest of the rounds of which is equal to his own legs in size. John Dobbs must be a man of wonderful nerve to venture to such an altitude on so frail a support. Even on the ground it is a fearful sight to see him, his lower extremities are so fragile, so attenuated, so completely approaching to nothingness. You tremble for him at every step he rashly takes. His knees roll about and smite each other like those of the *anatomie vivante*. Indeed, John Dobbs was in great danger for a long period of being kidnapped by some travelling showmen, who wished to make a harvest of his bare bones; and if they had succeeded, as, unfortunately for the pigs they did not, he would have made a formidable rival to the living-skeleton.

When exercising the calling of a labourer he wears an eternal pair of buck-skins, "a world

too wide," and covered with a solid coat of dirt and grease that shines like a dingy varnish. I have known John Dobbs five honest years, during which he has faithfully adhered to his buckskins, and they bear precisely the same appearance as when I first beheld them. I fancied when I came into the town that his buckskins were worn out, but I little knew their imperishable qualities. Worn out, indeed! They are as strong now as when I saw them first, and he had then worn them twenty-five years. When John Dobbs took unto himself a wife, he had a mind to be gay, and he put himself into these everlasting buckskins. He has worn them ever since, and they will last him till he goes where buckskins will be superfluous. These breeches are curious things, but the tale shall be duly told.

Whether John Dobbs's adherence to his buckskins, or their adherence to him, it is pretty much the same, arises from any particular regard, or from motives of economy, or from any worse reason, is a question which has puzzled the whole town at various times when

there has been a dearth of news, or an absence of striking incidents to attract attention. We are a people who can wonder at anything, and consequently have no lack of wonderment. We cannot imagine that any man can or will encase himself in one pair of breeches for his life-time without a very powerful cause. We are also a very inquisitive people, and were desirous of knowing what this extraordinary cause could be. Everybody's business was our business, we had a right to know it. It was a thing we had never heard of before, one pair of buckskins in thirty years ! " Miracles will never cease," said we. So extraordinary is the tenacity of these breeches to existence, they confounded our faculties quite entirely. They were a phenomenon as yet unexplained, we ought to know the secret of them, and know it we would.

The most learned of our *savans* acknowledged that John Dobbs's breeches were the hundred and first wonder of the world. We could conceive nothing equal to them. The pyramids of Egypt were not to be compared with them. The pyramids were wonderful

erections, it was true, and they had stood many years; but then they stood on broad bases, and there was nothing surprising in that. Dobbs's breeches had not the benefit of a broad base, their disc was circumscribed, the poor, attenuated, and miserable form of their proprietor could not afford them such an advantage. Yet they stood firm, and seemed to gain fresh solidity from the lapse of time. Yes, time that crumbled the pyramids slowly into dust seemed to have no effect upon the buckskins. The pyramids were nothing to the breeches. "They were the most wonderful production in *nature*," said we; but the sage bishop of Burleigh reminded us they were a "work of *art*."

This observation of our clever ecclesiastic struck us forcibly, and partly solved the mystery. Yes, it was but too evident that the breeches were a work of *art*, the *black art*. A natural pair of breeches would have vanished long since, these must be sustained by magic. Dobbs dealt with the devil, that was too plain. The remark made by our excellent bishop was

not intended to convey the meaning it did, and it was a singular illustration of that which has been remarked by many eminent men, that the "greatest discoveries are made by chance." When we made known to the good prelate our double interpretation of his observation, he was much impressed with the profound sagacity such an elucidation evinced. He admitted, reluctantly and with pious horror, that he feared we had indeed arrived at the proper but fearful conclusion. We established an inquisition. John Dobbs was interrogated, his replies were evasive, unsatisfactory, and they gave rise to the worst suspicions. He was too far gone to be reclaimed, we were afraid. If he had lived two centuries back, or if the laws of witchcraft had not been abolished, he would have been burned for a sorcerer "as sure as eggs are eggs."

Unfortunately we could neither burn him nor save his life by giving him an opportunity of drowning himself to prove his innocence. There was no getting John Dobbs near a pond; he has a terrible aversion to water, a species of

hydrophobia, unless it be well diluted with ardent spirits. We determined to be charitable, we would get the bishop, the rector, and the curate to exorcise him, and cast out the devil from him and the breeches ; if he, Satan, could not be driven out of the latter, we would burn them. However the clergy were saved the trouble, and we were disappointed of our *auto da fè*. The good woman, John Dobbs's better half expounded the affair, and solved the mystery. "The reason," she said, "that John wore the breeches so long was, that he had no others, and he regularly expended so much in quenching his raging thirst, that he could not afford to buy clothing." In order to preserve his buckskins it had been his practice for many years to coat them every Sunday morning with a composition of hog's lard, soot, and a little sugar, which gave them all the durability and polish that had so amazed us. Our minds were calmed by this information, and Dobbs was no longer regarded as one of the devil's own.

This explanation was a serious disappoint-

ment to the learned bishop, who had, with infinite zeal and talent, prepared a plan of a work that he intended to publish on the subject, entitled, "A Philosophical Enquiry into the alarming Mystery of John Dobbs's Breeches; in 2 vols. 4to. by the Rev. J. Mard, author of 'Sermons to Little Boys.'"

Return we now to the scene of action. The old gentleman having disburthened himself of part of his weight of satisfaction to his equally delighted wife and daughters, has left the ladies to enjoy their laugh at his sagacity, and his rival's presumption. None of the good creatures ever dream of a man losing a shilling by design. Mr. Thryvewell has laughed his fill at the imagined triumph over his "bloodsuckers," and revisits the field of his victory accompanied by a servant who bears a plenteous supply of strong beer, of which the pig-killer amply partakes. He lays down the vessel with the air of a judge in such matters, and observes to the old gentleman — "That's prime stuff, sir; it does one's heat good."

There is nothing more pleasing to a brewer

than to hear his beer praised—whether it be a public compounder, who brews for money, or a private one, who brews for fame. Our hearty old friend is one of the latter class, of course, and he is much flattered by the opinion of John Dobbs, than whom a greater consumer, or an abler connoisseur, is not to be found within the walls of our town. His praise may be moreover regarded as sincere. Give him a jug of inferior “tippie,” and you will soon hear of it. Having won his wager, and heard his beer praised, Mr. Thryvewell sits down on a bench opposite the pig-stye with the air of a man that needs no other felicity. He is content with himself, and all the world. He believes there are none on earth who can compete with him in judgment, so far as relates to pigs and beer, and what more can man desire? His happiness is complete. Of such things too, reader, is much of man’s happiness composed, if people would confess as much.

There is an air of serene pleasure about our jovial friend at this moment which is truly enviable. The first burst of triumph over, he no

longer ridicules his friends, for he is generous and will not exult over the fallen. But he enjoys his own comfortable thoughts with a composed smile and a sedate chuckle alternately, and his honest face beams with the light of inward glee. He sits with his arms folded over his chest, and with his respectable protuberance before him, seemingly inclined to burst the buttonholes of his ample waistcoat at every slight convulsion of suppressed laughter, the picture of happy old age. His eye turns first to the vanquished—then to the beer jug—then to the pig: all are alike subjects of pleasurable emotion. He is the happiest man in our town, and long may he be so.

To go back to the pig. The animal seems to be in a state of considerable excitement. He regards Dobbs with an instinctive dread. The wily old fellow has a piece of cord in his hand saturated with the gore of hundreds of the swinish multitude, which has a noose at one end, intended to catch the pig by the upper jaw, on which, if the noose be dexterously passed over, it is securely held by the tusks.

Dobbs now advances towards the sty; the pig stares—he puts one leg over the rails; the pig wonders what he means. Dobbs gets the other leg over; the pig considers himself in bad company, and retreats within his sleeping apartment, looking at the butcher as if he wished him in—any place but where he is.

Dobbs next tries to coax him out by gentle means. He calls out “chuck, chuck” several times in an insinuating tone, but it won’t do; the pig is suspicious. John Dobbs next begins to rattle the trough, as if he intended to feed his victim. This is a tempting sound, and draws the pig’s head to the door of his dormitory, from whence he espies the cheat, and turns back in sheer disgust. Dobbs tries again in vain; the pig is satisfied there is something wrong intended, else why deceive him? There is no alternative now but to go into his den and dislodge him. Dobbs enters and coaxes the hapless swine to come out; the pig sticks his tail up in a corner with a dogged air that seems to say, “I’ll see you — first.”

A boy is ordered next to jump over the rails

of the sty to "huck him out," while old Dobbs cunningly places himself by the side of the door so as not to be seen by his victim, holding the noose ready to slip over his nose as he comes out. Now the pig rushes forth; the noose faces him—he cannot avoid it, out he must go, for the boy is taking great liberties with his tail: the noose comes nearer; the pig is in despair; he raises his head, and the slip-knot is just on his nose; he drops his head again with great dexterity, and slips away under the rope. "Never mind," exclaims Dobbs, "I'll have ee presently."

The boy is now stationed at the door of the bedchamber to prevent the pig from re-entering. Dobbs tries to insinuate himself into his good graces. He scratches his back, and talks smoothly. No, no!—the pig remembers that he rattled the trough without putting anything in it; he has no faith in man, and he is certain that John Dobbs is a villain. The butcher tries to pass over the noose suddenly, but the pig is not to be taken by surprise, and cannot understand why such ungentlemanlike treatment

should be offered him — he will not be “led by the nose” by any man. Dobbs finds he has a queer customer, and loses patience ; he rapidly repeats his attempts, which are defeated, and he and the pig dance round the sty, and across it, at a great rate for some minutes. This round is certainly to the advantage of the pig, who has completely winded his antagonist.

Dobbs is vexed, and begins to swear. The pig begins to squeak loud enough to deafen us all. Dobbs stands before him, and looks him in the face with an air of desperation. The pig thinks him the most ill-looking fellow he ever saw, and turns his back to him. Dobbs prepares to seize him by one of his ears, intending to force the noose upon him. He makes a dart at the ear—the pig gets away ; another attempt meets the same success, and the pig and the butcher finally face each other, both bobbing from side to side and up and down as the noose approaches the nose and is avoided. At length it is plain the pig must be caught ; he has no chance—all is over—on it must go. He plunges despairingly between

the butcher's legs; up go his heels, and Dobbs descends in a sitting posture amid the wet and filthy mire of the sty. The boy is knocked down in the mud, and Dobbs rolls over him. The pig regains his tenement.

All laugh loudly at the discomfiture of the butcher, and the old gentleman louder than any; his sides shake till they are ready to burst, and he exclaims, when he has recovered his breath, "That was the best thing I ever saw!" Dobbs's ire is potent. He is wet where every man likes to be dry; he is bemired and ridiculed. He looks that which he cannot speak. The old gentleman desires him to take "some more beer, and wet the inside as well as the out." A hearty draught consoles and restores him, and a man is desired to get into the sty to help him.

The poor pig is now soon caught; he struggles much to get his teeth disentangled from the string, but to no purpose, and he roars louder than ever. Everybody is well nigh stunned. The gate of the sty is opened—he is forced out; he hangs back, but they twist

his tail, and who can stand that? Out he goes. The whole of the assistants lift him on a stool, where he is laid sideways, and he squeaks with terrific energy. He anticipates the worst that can befall him, for he is certain he has got into bad hands. Old Dobbs is sure of his game; he closes the open mouth of his prey, ties it up with the cord, which he winds round both jaws as tightly as possible, and then something like silence is obtained. The pig can only vent his reproaches by inward gruntings—"curses not loud, but deep." He still tries to get off the stool, for, like a true hero, he will never give in while breath is left; but there are so many to contend with, that it is impossible. They hold him, throw their whole weight upon him, grasp his ears, his tail, his legs—anything. He has no hope.

Dobbs takes breath, and looks as if glorying in his coming revenge. He rubs his knife on the steel, scrapes off some of the grizzly hair on the back of his hand, to be sure that it will cut well, places it between his teeth, and orders the pig to be turned on his back. He now

grins with horrid delight, and scrapes the hair off the throat of the pig, leaving a space of about two inches clear, makes an incision through the skin into the white snowy fat beneath, and then places the point of the knife, having the edge upwards, into the cut, from which no blood has yet exuded to prevent him from seeing what he is about. He takes his aim, and—the pig's life is not worth two minutes' purchase.

The rude plunge of the knife has astonished the pig, the cold steel forced into his warm vitals has paralysed him for a few seconds; but he soon collects himself, and is determined not to die if he can help it, or at least to give his murderers as much trouble as possible. He struggles fearfully, kicks, plunges, and tries to get away. Still all is in vain—he must die, and it would be as well to take it easily; but that is not in the pig's nature, because it is against his will. Now he grows faint—his eyes become filmed; he gasps—he is still, all but the laboured heavings of his chest and flanks, which seem to indicate the sickness of

approaching death. But is he to be slaughtered against his inclination, and die quietly? No, he will not. He gathers all his remaining strength, and concentrates his powers for one grand and final struggle with his fate. It is terrific, but brief. He clings to life with all the obstinate tenacity of his nature; alas! that nature fails him. The blood that supported it is gushing away in a rapid torrent into the bowl held by a female, whose face glows with fiendish satisfaction. With a general convulsion of his unwieldy frame, the brave but unfortunate pig breathes his last. Dobbs wipes his knife, and exclaims "He is done!" with the air of a cock that has beaten his opponent in a hard battle, and not a little glad is John that he has got rid of so troublesome a customer.

The funeral-pile is now lighted. A truss of straw is opened, and Dobbs makes a comfortable bed, on which the mortal remains of the pig are laid, and it is then set fire to. The limbs are lifted carefully up, so that the flames shall pass equally over all parts of the body, and that

in such a manner as not to injure the hide. Dobbs's method of "removing superfluous hair without destroying the skin" is an effectual one, and beats all the "Roseate Powder," and "Depilatories," and other quack preparations, in the universe. When the body has been turned, and both sides served alike, it is reconveyed to the stool, where it is washed, scraped, and scrubbed, till it is, as Dobbs says, "as clean as a baby, and as pretty a pig as ever he see'd in his life."

The body is next hoisted up by a block and tackle, and is suspended on a beam in an out-house, it is then disencumbered of its internals, and a white mass of fat is developed, sufficient to satisfy an Esquimaux. Everybody looks and admires, because they are expected to do so on such an occasion. All praise the feeding of the animal, and anticipate the flavour of the meat, the beauty of the hams, and the quantity of lard — *alias* "flick."

The ladies of the house now venture to step forth, and after sundry amiable exclamations of concern for the fate of the pig, such as

“Poor thing!” “What a pity to kill him!” each ventures to give her opinion as to its merits. The young ones have “no doubt the griskins will be delicious,” and their mamma pronounces “there will be a lovely chine, and as sweet a pot of lard as ever was made.” Dobbs, who is an insinuating sort of man, agrees with all that is said, and adds much in behalf of the slaughtered creature, and winds up with a compliment to the old lady’s pastry, and “lardy cakes,” by which she is seduced into a promise that he shall have “one of the first she makes” —the very thing he aimed at.

The ladies depart. John Dobbs has his usual refection of bread and cheese and beer, and is as happy, and will shortly be as independent, as any man on this side the tropics. Fifty to one he returns home, and proves his independence by thumping his wife, a practice to which it is said he adheres as regularly, as he does to the custom of varnishing his breeches. I once ventured to remonstrate with him on this subject, and asked, why he continued to do it in defiance of the opinion of all who em-

ployed him. The only reply I had was, "Lord love 'ee, what would a man do with a wife without hiding her once now and then — couldn't manage 'em at all; besides, let people say what they will, the women likes us the better for 't."

As John Dobbs spoke from long experience, of which I could not boast, I said no more.

A PARTY.

“The feast of reason, and the flow of soul.”

IN days gone by, when the Dashaway Administration was in its zenith, we used to have dinner parties, or balls, and concerts, or musical *soirées*, or pic-nics, or *déjeunés*, but these things were innovations, and not to our taste. Mrs. Dashaway would have made us genteel if she could, but it was not to be done. We all admired the idea of being made genteel for a time, but afterwards we attended the pic-nics, and other fine things with finer names, which that lady gave, as a New Zealander goes to hear the missionaries hold forth—not for the sake of the thing itself, but for what might be given us by way of reward for our attendance.

“We will have nothing to do with your God,” says the savage; “his laws can only be

meant for white men, nobody amongst us is bad enough to deserve his punishments; but as we have listened to all you have to say on the subject, perhaps you will give us a blanket."* We will have nothing to do with your gentility, said we to ourselves; its rules can only be meant for people like you, Mrs. Dashaway; there is nobody here who can understand them, but as we have received our lesson, perhaps you will give us a good dinner.

When the lady's means were exhausted, and her credit stopped, we forbore to receive any further instruction. Our little doctor, who was a regular frequenter of the musical parties, with his flute in one pocket and a bundle of music in another, spreading out the tail of his coat like that of a fan-tailed pigeon—even the little doctor, and his large wife, who sang louder and longer there than anybody else, yes, even these became seceders. The jolly fox-hunter of the High Street was witty on the subject of poor Mrs. Dashaway's pic-nics. "I

* Vide Earle's residence in New Zealand.

don't want to go," said he, to pick *nir*, "let me go where I can pick a leg of mutton."

Gentility requires something more than itself to support it. It needs substance, which its promulgator had not, and therefore her gentility was soon at a discount. A few would-be leaders started a gentility of their own, as has already been said; but we, for the greater part, reverted to our own old-established customs. Not that any of us, even the most prejudiced, could refuse to admit the originality of these various plans for our improvement,—that was a merit which was never denied them; but the fact was, we were surfeited with gentility to sickness. We turned towards our own manners, customs, habits, and tastes, with the same feelings that a traveller experiences when, after having explored distant countries to satisfy his curiosity, he returns to the land of his birth, and sets his weary foot on his own threshold.

We had seen enough of gentility, and all that. We no longer thought of giving an evening's entertainment, which should consist

of the "*little elegances*" that constituted the distinguishing traits of Mrs. Dashaway's fêtes. Poor old Dr. Slaimour always abominated such things, even when they were at their height of popularity. After a visit to Mrs. Dashaway, people needed not his anti-bilious pills, and even the doctor himself, who, when he goes to one of our own regular parties always carries a box in his pocket for his private use, said that her suppers were so extremely light, that to take a pill after them was a needless extravagance. Even the Bishop of Burleigh complained of the thinness of her beef slices; and our fox-hunter has been heard to protest, that Mrs. Dashaway could cover his field called the "five acres," with a ham of ten pounds weight.

Things are different now. We have suppers that are solid, substantial matters. Quarters of mutton, cut into wedges, and rounds of beef carved into respectable steaks, fly before us. Our suppers, in fact, are things which are felt at the moment, and for some time afterwards. You go to bed stupid, sleep with the

nightmare, and get up with a headache. You try to read the paper, and you go over a very interesting leader, and a speech of your favourite member, without understanding a word of either. Within your brain all is chaos, your thoughts are confused, and there is a revolution in your stomach. You consult your pill-box, and order a neck of mutton. Broth is your only consolation—Calomel and colocynth your best friends. You cannot bear to look a sheep or an ox in the face—even the old cow in the meadow causes painful reminiscences. You walk about that day like a resuscitated corpse—your chin unshorn, your face grimy, your hair dusty, your eyes half shut, your tongue white or brown, your hand shaking, and your whole self bedevilled. A day or two brings you round, and at it you go again. 'This is life in "our town."'

Mrs. Dashaway's policy was somewhat liberal—she was not an exclusive. It was her favourite scheme to form the whole town into one genteel family circle, as it were. Of course she had objections to some, but they were very

few, and easily got rid of if they had money. The professionals and the moneyed men were admitted ; the non-professionals could not be refused, though they might have but small incomes. People are entitled by law to be called gentlemen who do nothing. Tradesmen were eschewed, all but one, our fox-hunter ; but those who had been in trade and were retired were welcome. The last were generally warm in the purse, just the sort of people Mrs. Dashaway liked, for she always advocated the moneyed interests. When her administration ceased to be, we divided into several classes, as has been said before, therefore the picture now given of our party is that of a particular caste.

The fox-hunter having recently made an addition to his house in the shape of a new room, and also increased the accommodations for his guests in a variety of ways, gave a tremendous dinner to all that he could muster in "our town," and for miles round. His means are ample, and his disposition liberal. His room was spacious, his wine-cellar well filled.

The old saying commonly in use on such occasions is not to our taste.—We hate to hear of the “groanings of tables,” and in sooth we have no particular desire for “groanings” of any sort. We shall therefore only remark that the tables were covered with dishes, and surrounded by guests, till there was not a spare inch to be seen. The men on this eventful day were glorious—the fox-hunter, who is a man that thinks “an extra bottle or two is nothing when one is in for it,” and that his best friend is he who can keep his seat the longest—had the satisfaction of seeing his visitors one by one “done up,” as he calls it—which means that they were down under the table.

The sea-captain had been extremely gallant in the early part of the evening, and had “fought his battles o’er again,” for the especial edification of his host and the company—every one of them having heard them fifty times before. He was just in the middle of an almost interminable story, in which he had rendered seven Frenchmen *hors de combat*—when he was interrupted by the lieutenant,

who had just sufficient strength left to exclaim, "'twas only six, captain, last time," when he sunk on the floor. "Never mind him," said the captain, "he's drunk," and he proceeded to tell the remainder to his only listener, his host, unconscious that there were none of the others left in their seats. The fox-hunter is a wag in his way. Opening one of his small eyes as wide as wine would permit him, he looked slily towards the captain as he said, "None of your gammon, 'twas only six last time — *I* heard you tell the story."

"It was my mistake then, my dear fellow, I assure you — I killed seven with my own arm, and took the fort, and one hundred and sixty men prisoners; that is, they surrendered the fort and themselves to me when they saw I killed seven single-handed, for there was not a soul of my crew within a mile of me. I planted the English colours myself, received the governor's sword, and gave three *such* cheers that my crew heard them, and came running up to me, thinking something was the matter. But all the work was done, and here you see me

only a commander. D—e if many a fellow that never did half as much as I have done isn't an admiral. Merit is no use now-a-days; no matter what a man does if he has no interest."

"You are a very ill-used man, there's no doubt of it," said the fox-hunter, "but there's no use in grieving over what can't be helped. Fill your glass, and drink to the repose of our friends below us. They'll have had their night's rest out by and by, and then we can have at it again. Meantime you shall have a pipe, for that old story of the seven Frenchmen, and not being made an admiral to boot, always puts your pipe out. I will say this for you, Captain, that your stories are the best I ever heard; if anybody else were to tell 'em, I should be unable to hear 'em twice over; but when you relate your adventures there's always something *new*. I have heard you tell that same story nineteen times, and every one differed from the others. You began with killing *two* Frenchmen, but your bravery and loyalty increases, and to-night you

have killed *seven*! Bravo! my boy, this is as it should be. Next year 'twill be seventeen, and, in a year or two more, you will kill the whole garrison and eat the governor for breakfast. That is just what I like. It gives your stories such an endless variety, and you, in spite of that ugly face, such a very agreeable fellow."

The pipe was brought, and the captain, who is no flincher, proceeded, with much solemnity, to fill, determined never to strike his colours to his opponent, who, on the other hand, was equally bent upon not "giving in" to mortal man.

"I am giving you an advantage," said the host, "and no slight one, for you have often said that a pipe sobers you, and I am no smoker; but never mind, we'll take glass for glass, and drink 'The Navy' to begin with."

"I'll drink that," said the Lieutenant from beneath the table, in an indistinct voice; "help me up—I'll drink 'The Navy' as long as I'm able."

“ And that is not long,” returned the host ;
“ but you shall never say you could not drink
to anything in my house. Lend a hand here,
Captain, and let us place this hero in his seat
again.”

The captain placed his pipe between his teeth, where he held it firmly, and gravely endeavoured to proffer his aid ; but the wine had so operated upon him, that though he could keep his seat with great composure, his ballast was shifted when he stood or tried to stand upright. In his own language, he “ lurched ” considerably ; but making, as every man who is drunk does, a determined effort to appear sober, he staggered to the side of the fallen supporter of the navy, where he well-nigh tumbled over him, but was prevented by the interposition of the bulky weight of his host, who made a corresponding roll, which had a counter effect upon the captain, and indeed saved both from going head-foremost. They then stood, one on each side of the lieutenant, in all the majesty of tipsy men, alternately rolling forward,

and making efforts at self-resumption, till even the wonder of the almost insensible lieutenant was excited.

“What the devil is that I see,” said he, “yawing about over me, and bobbing its ugly head up and down, like a great monkey looking through a bundle of black rope-yarn?”

“Why it’s the captain’s head, and his ugly black whiskers,” replied the host; “he’s quite drunk—drunk as a beast, and can’t stand. See how sober I——”

At this moment the speaker made a very unsober motion towards the captain, who at the same time rolled towards him, and he received into his capacious mouth the entire bowl of the captain’s pipe full of burning tobacco. Even the lieutenant laughed at the spluttering and coughing which followed; and when the host had evacuated this troublesome tenant from his mouth, and the captain had extracted the point of the pipe from his palate, into which it had been driven, a ceremony which he performed with the elegance of a cat that has got a fish-bone stuck in her mouth —

they fell together by the ears, each reproaching the other for being drunk, till the dispute was ended by both falling upon the lieutenant, who was nearly crushed to death by their weight. It was a marvel that he ever breathed again, for their united gravity must have been thirty stone, horseman's weight; but he did breathe, after a little time, and that in no very gentle terms. He reproached both, and pronounced them equally and shamefully intoxicated, while he was only injured by their ill-treatment, and not at all affected by liquor.

"I tell you," said he, speaking as clearly as he could, "you are both awfully drunk, and only fit to go to bed. You have nearly killed me, and I must go home."

"A pretty fellow to go home," replied the host, clearing his mouth of the ashes of his pipe, "that can't stand! It is you, sir, who are drunk; and if I had not kindly endeavoured to lift you up, I should not have been knocked down by that drunken fellow there, nor have had his rascally pipe in my mouth."

"There you are quite wrong," said the cap-

tain ; “ if you had been sober, you would not have pulled me down over that beast who has made himself so ungentlemanly drunk, that he can’t see a hole through a grating, nor tell the head of his Majesty’s officer from that of a monkey, nor a fine manly pair of whiskers from a bundle of rope-yarn. You are both done up, and I ’m ashamed of you !”

“ I scorn your words !” retorted the lieutenant, with a most unequivocal hickup—“ I scorn your words, captain ! I say you are both indecently drunk. Who, but two drunken fellows like yourselves, would think of smoking the same pipe at the same time ? I have seen two pigs nibble a straw at each end, but never two men suck the same pipe before, and one of the ends on fire, too ! I don’t like such intemperance—it’s disgusting. Talk of the head of his Majesty’s officer, indeed !—I could paint a better with a bucket of tar and an old swab !”

There is no means of ascertaining how this affair might have terminated. The captain and lieutenant were dangerously near each other,

and the ire of the former was great at hearing the simple instruments named with which a better head than his own might be fabricated. His hands were mechanically closed up into a formidable pair of fists. Words he had none, for utterance, from a combination of causes, was denied him; but he made a hostile indication of painting his opponent's face, which was happily prevented by the interposition of the host, who said, "This will never do. I say this will never do—I'll know the rights of this." And he crawled on his hands and knees, over the prostrate bodies of some of their boon companions who were fast asleep, towards the bell-rope, which he pulled with some energy.

Mary, a steady old servant-woman, soon put her head in at the door, and beheld the captain "looking terribly black—blacker than ever," as she said, at the lieutenant, who was lying down rubbing his stomach, which was nearly beaten in. Her master was sitting cross-legged by the fireplace, holding himself up by the fender, and seven or eight men were "snoring

like hogs about the room." Mary's steadiness was shocked; but she coolly asked "Does master want anything?"

"Yes, Mary," was the reply; "I want you to tell me the truth. 'Take a candle off the table, and look at me and these two fellows, and tell me which of us is drunk.'"

"There's no occasion for a light," said Mary; "you're all drunk together." And she retired.

"Mary is right, I think," said the host, with a good-humoured chuckle; "and now let us be satisfied. As we are on the ground, we are safe; we can't fall lower, and we'll drink the navy here."

The navy was accordingly drunk with loud and hearty acclamations, and the brave heroes who had added to its laurels, from Nelson down to the captain himself, were also toasted in bumpers. Long before the last-mentioned hero was proposed by the waggish host, the lieutenant had relapsed into utter insensibility; and there now remained nothing for the only two capable of continuing the affray but to

drink one against the other, occasionally amusing themselves with inserting the neck of a bottle into the collapsed jaws of some of their comrades, and delighting themselves to hear the gurgling sound of the abused wine, as it, with seeming reluctance, went downwards into the feverish and burning abyss of each parched throat.

It having been understood this eventful dinner was to end in a "regular night of it," to use the words of the fox-hunter, the lady of the house had very wisely retreated to bed at an early hour, leaving the gentlemen to their enjoyments, and only taking care to order that coffee and all other necessary things should be ready when called for. Seven o'clock in the morning found the host still cross-legged, with his back against the wall, one elbow on the fender and the other on the seat of a chair. Before him stood several empty bottles, or "dead men," one partially empty, a glass ditto: his features swollen and distorted; his naturally small eyes scarcely perceptible; his lips livid, and his head, of no ordinary dimensions,

too heavy to be sustained by the huge muscles of his ample neck, and seemingly in doubt as to which side it should fall. From its lateral inclinations, it appeared to be wavering between the choice of rolling under the grate or into the coal-scuttle.

The bold captain was still smoking; he had had a fresh supply of pipes and tobacco after the disaster which had placed the bowl of the first in the mouth of his host, and had continued to smoke and drink in determined rivalry, and with an unflinching resolution worthy of the honourable cause. But he had failed in his last glass, which stood full on the floor before him. He had inclination enough to drink it, but his limbs were overpowered by the potency of his libations, and his valiant arm, which had stood him so much in need before the enemy, now proved faithless. It refused to convey the much-desired glass to his lips. His huge eyes were opened to their full extent with a wild and ferocious stare, as if ready to start from their sockets; but, on closer inspection, it might be seen they were

duller than ordinary, and gradually becoming filmed. His purple lips still emitted the smoke from the pipe, which his teeth firmly compressed, but both arms hung heavily by his side, and his hands, seemingly without life, rested on the floor.

“Come, captain,” said the host, with considerable difficulty of expression — “come, drink off your bumper, and I’ll give you another toast! What are you about? You certainly *are* drunk. You may look as fierce as you like, but you are incontrovertibly drunk. If not, drink as I bid you, and show yourself a man.”

During this address, the eyes of the mariner had been rolling first to the wished-for glass, then to the speaker, as if he intended that the host should lift the glass to his lips for him. But this was either not understood by the fox-hunter, or he was incapable of doing it; and he laughed as heartily as he could at the staring horror of the captain, whose rage at finding himself beaten induced him to make a last effort to regain possession of his glass, and in

doing so he fell prostrate on the floor utterly insensible. His companion and friend no sooner saw that victory was decided in his favour, than he filled his own glass and crawled to the body of the fallen hero, whose huge barrel of a carcase he bestrode valiantly *à la* Bacchus; and when Mary opened the door, to know if they would like any coffee, her master was huzzaing, with the energy of a London tailor on a coronation-day, in honour of his own triumph.

The redoubtable captain narrowly escaped a fit of apoplexy after this memorable defeat; but, by dint of repeated blood-lettings, and other antiphlogistic measures, he, at the expiration of some five or six weeks, recovered. It is almost needless to say that he resumed his old habits. This he did with a degree of pertinacity proportioned to the ridicule which his defeat excited amongst those who, from much that he had done, and more that he had said, had always deemed him invincible. The fox-hunter was not a little proud of his victory. It has been his boast ever since, and he reigns

the undisputed champion of these parts in drinking. The captain, however, intimates an intention of recovering the laurels which have been stripped from his deserving brow on some future occasion; and it is understood that he is in regular course of training—not at his own expense, be it observed, for he is a regular visiter to those whose cellars are well stored, and intends that his friends shall have the honour of preparing him for the anticipated contest. Bets are high against him, and five to four are laid with confidence that the next struggle for supremacy, should it take place, will end on his part in a lengthened visit to the churchyard.

THE LAWYER.

A CANDIDATE FOR THE VOX POPULI.

“And did I not expose myself there? Did I know whether I stood on my head or my heels? What the devil had I to do with parliament? what’s my country to me?”

The Way to Keep Him.

IT has been remarked by a celebrated foreigner, that one of the chief characteristics of Englishmen is their love of litigation. Observation and experience have led me to the same conclusion. Give honest John Bull anything, no matter what, to dispute about—anything that will enable him to trump up a good lasting lawsuit to his own ruin and that of his adversary, and he is *pro tem.* happy. In the midst of pleas, declarations, replies, and rejoinders, and all the other means of annoyance to

himself and others, he struts and frets his brief hour, and is left to misery and repentance for the remainder of his life.

No man is so full of business as he who has a lawsuit, and no man does so little. He attends to nothing else. "From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve," and through the long gloom of night, he is full of it. It is his waking dream by day, and his sleeping vision at night. It is going on, or it is not going on; he has to produce more papers, or he has brought forward all the papers that can be produced—each is a sufficient cause for thinking and speaking of it to the exclusion of all things besides. He is like a musical snuff-box that only plays one tune, you can get nothing but that out of him. It is a grief due to every breast in his imagination, and upon every breast that he can hold by the button he mercilessly inflicts it. He is restless, fidgety, nervous, cross, exalted, depressed—happy and miserable, in delight and despair, by turns, and is for ever "ringing the world with a vain stir." Tell him of the most "barbarous murder"

that ever was committed, even on the body of an infant—ay, even though it be the child of his best friend, and the only effect you produce is to make him speak of law-courts and law-suits in general, and his own lawsuit in particular.

Every Englishman's lawsuit is his castle—force him out of it if you can. He has possession, and will keep it in spite of your teeth. Attempt to turn the conversation on another topic, and you offend him. Disagree with him, and he is the most injured of all ill-used men; agree with him, and you are bored to death. In vain you try to give him the “dead cut”—he won't have it. Every time you cross his path, he makes a dead set at you, and has the same dull, monotonous detail ready for your sickened ear. He has “damnable iteration in him,” and you must endure it—there is no help; you are punished for your sins in part by being obliged to listen to his eternal loquacity. However urgent may be your own affairs at the moment, they must give way; what are your concerns compared to his law-

suit? You must have the uncertainty of the law, the law's delay, and all the ins and outs of the law, fully revealed to you. Perhaps your "better half" is sitting anxiously waiting your return, and your stomach is yearning for the dinner that is cooling itself and warming the temper of your lady; perhaps you are going to visit a friend, a *bon vivant*, who will not wait a minute for his guests; or, perhaps—oh! delightful idea!—you have an assignation with "the idol of your soul," and the man of law having detained you a full hour and a half beyond your time, you arrive all impatience and perspiration, and are informed, to your especial satisfaction, that she has been *cicisbeoed* to the opera by a long captain in the lancers. How pleasantly you look at the man of law the next time you meet him!

In rural situations, amidst all the arcadian simplicity and unsophisticated spirit with which poets (and by the way poets only) have decked the tillers of the earth, and the keepers of flocks and herds, it might be presumed that a lawyer would starve. No such thing. It is there

he thrives, and indeed a lawyer is a sort of thing that, plant him where you may, he will thrive. One thing only is requisite,—talents may be dispensed with on his own part, for it is easy to get a “managing clerk,”—but he must be a good mischief-maker. It is true that, in villages where there is no resident lawyer, one is seldom or never wanted, and, as is usual with other monsters, the less they are known the more they are dreaded. But no sooner does any one of these fomenters of evil take up his abode in a place where all are distinguished for neighbourly feelings, and the absence of complaint, than everybody sagely discovers that a lawyer was the only thing they wanted. A hasty word then becomes a serious matter. To wheel a barrow upon a neighbour’s boundary is a grave offence, an encroachment upon his rights and privileges, and a subject for the consideration of a jury. A cuff, which without a lawyer would only have given rise to a kick, brings an action for assault and battery.

John Bull is a sturdy, stubborn, dogged

sort of animal, a good fellow at bottom, and a generous at heart, but somewhat opinionative, and a mighty stickler for his rights. He will maintain at the hazard of property and life an opinion when he has formed one, or, what is the same thing to him, when he has received it from somebody else, and will quarrel with his own father, though he venerate his parents above all things, in support of it. He lives not so much in his own opinion as in that which he thinks is or will be formed of him by others. Such a man is unfortunately but a too easy prey for the designing. He is frank and unsuspecting, and if told he is right, readily believes he is told the truth; the sooner, perhaps, because the wish gives rise to the belief. He is very susceptible of injury and insult, and no man sooner fancies himself insulted and injured if anybody tell him so. He is jealous of his honour, and dreads what others will think of him if he does not "see himself righted."

The best of honest John's feelings lay him open to the practised wiles of the artful, and

hence the existence and success of such swarms of lawyers as infest this fair island. The disputes which John's ancestors settled with the quarter-staff, he refers to the quarter sessions; not, be it remembered, because he is dwindled in spirit, or a whit less pugnacious than his forefathers, but because he respects and fears the law. Many a man's fingers itch to break a head who dares not break the peace.

It has already been shown that "our town" is tolerably well provided in respect to these same gentry of the long-headed race. But the family of lawyers to which allusion was made in the earlier part of our pages are not the chief tribe within our walls. The "head lawyer," as the men of Gotham call him (I presume because he does the most mischief) is another sort of man, one of a different class and order altogether. He is a thorough plebeian in birth and education, but a consummate aristocrat in pretensions, with more than all the pride of aristocracy. The others are more plain and homely. There is a simplicity, a spirit of *bonhommie* about them, which

the head man lacks wofully. The others are somewhat rough and unpolished in manners and speech, but kindly disposed at heart ; he is smooth-tongued and plausible, but heartless. He would distrain your goods and chattels, consign your family to a workhouse, and yourself to a gaol, with the most ineffable suavity and mildness ; and he would keep you in durance for the term of an Irish lease, *i. e.* “for ever and a day,” if he could, rather than forego a sixpence of his costs.

Like Gil Blas, our head lawyer will entertain you with a “number of fine nothings.” He attunes his voice to the softest pitch of melody ; pays his compliments with all imaginable blandness ; inquires after your health and affairs, even to your dogs and pigs, with due kindness ; and “discourses most eloquent music ;” but in the end says nothing, and means, if possible, less. A superficial observer would fancy him the most sincere of men—the old ladies call him “charmingly polite ;” and so he is, no man more so, but he has an eye to their last wills and testaments, and sees

legacies and executorships in perspective. He sees with the eye of truth too, his system “works well;” that is to say for himself—he is a thriving man. It is often said that “fine words butter no parsnips,” but the assertion is false—fine words have buttered all our head lawyer’s parsnips. Everything prospers with him. He has reversed another old adage about bringing one’s “noble to ninepence;” he has brought his ninepence to a noble, and now looks forward to nobility for his daughter.

But little is known of the history of our head lawyer, previously to his arrival in this refuge for the destitute—“our town.” He came hither, like some others, as poor, to use the popular phrase—“as poor as a church-mouse.” He was clerk to his predecessor, who died after the aspiring gentleman had been in his office long enough to know all the private affairs of his clients, and when the former “slipped out of his slippers, the latter slipped in.” How he first obtained the advantages of property was, as we have seen, by the detail of personal and family grievances of Mrs. Bays, through the medium

of his wife, and his superintendence of the property of her relatives. "Get money; get it honestly if you can, but get money," said the dying quaker to his son. What was the parental advice which our head lawyer received we know not. At the time of his commencement in practice he became the occupant of a small house at the upper end of our town, remarkable only for its mean appearance outside, and its destitute condition within. It was cheaply rented, that was everything. He subsequently purchased another cheaply, and he has since from time to time made such alterations and additions in its size, and accommodations, that it is now a comparative mansion. But as these addenda have been made as inclination and increase of prosperity have allowed from time to time, and the taste only of the proprietor has been consulted, there is neither form, regularity, nor proportion in its arrangement. If a parcel of boys were to form pieces of wet clay into square, oblong, oval, or octagon lumps, and then throw them all at a square mass on a rising mound, just leaving them where chance

allowed them to stick, they would form a pretty just model of our head lawyer's mansion, as he calls it. To make the picture complete, the said boys must whitewash the model, give it a flaming red door, with a brass knocker, brass plate, and brass handle to lock ; window-frames to match the door ; green railings in front of a narrow slip, complacently called a lawn ; put a square lump of clay, painted slate-colour, with bright red tiles, alongside the gate, and call it the stables and coach-house ; and cram the aforesaid narrow slip as thick as it can hold with evergreens, and shrubs of every hue and denomination, so thickly that each one choaks the other and none can grow.

It is only very lately that the "mansion" has been finished. The last addition was in the shape of a new drawing-room, dining-room, and sundry chambers above. These apartments have contrived to march up to the other part of the building, where they have stuck themselves as close as a corn-plaister, and they have given the house much about the same

aspect as that borne by a very ordinary face with irregular features, having a huge wen upon one cheek. Nevertheless, the lawyer takes much pride to himself for the improvement, and he had a very large party of his friends and acquaintance to celebrate the remarkable event by a splendid dinner in the latter, and an almost insufferable squeeze in the former. Before the ample meal was served up the host invited his guests to take a survey outside the building, in order that he might obtain their opinions of the external effect produced. Out they went. The narrow slip of ground, or "lawn and shrubbery" was too narrow to contain the multitude, and too close to the building to enable them to see the effect of the improvements distinctly. It was agreed they should cross the "street," so called, and enter a paddock belonging to the lawyer, which faced his house, and there, under the very beautiful and umbrageous shelter of a venerable walnut-tree, the only picturesque thing on the lawyer's property, a slight refection was

served, consisting merely of cakes, sweetmeats, and wine, just by way of amusement till dinner was ready.

People cannot be expected to give pleasant opinions on empty stomachs, and the arrangement was so far judicious. The good folks ate and looked, and looked and ate, then they admired and ate again, and the more they ate and drank the more they praised the building, and lauded the lawyer's taste. The latter was in perfect elysium. He had never been so delighted before, and he stood erect, and dignified, and made a very polite and becoming acknowledgment to all. The party "fooled him to the top of his bent," and one proposed that his health should be drunk with three times three. It was agreed *nem. con.* and the air was filled with the acclamations of the sincere friends, which were loudly responded to by the assembled tag-rag of "our town," who were collected together, and filled with amazement.

They shouted in fine style. The vaulted arch of the heavens seemed to ring with their deafening cheers. Poor creatures! they knew

not what they did ; but the lawyer fancied it was all right, and was in wonder at his own popularity.

And well he might, for he had been burned in effigy twice during the preceding year before his own doors. However, popularity is a very sweet thing, though not very often retained, and the lawyer thought he would keep it as long as he could. He sent his factotum away to the small-beer brewers for two barrels of single X ale, and posted off his servant-maid at the same time to the butcher's shop, with orders that all the sheep's heads and plucks should be sent *instantly* to his domain, then and there to be charitably distributed to the idle assemblage who were laboriously straining their throats in his honour. Small-beer goes far with those whose beverage is water. The mob shouted away like mad, and finished the two barrels by a chorus of applause that so far worked upon the lawyer's obdurate heart that he actually sent for two more.

Strange work there was, as may be expected. The sheep's heads and plucks were scrambled

for, run for, quarrelled for, fought for, and most of them were torn in pieces by the voracious strugglers. Then there was bread-and-cheese given away, and finally tobacco. The expense was indeed enormous, and must have played the deuce with the lawyer's revenue. "In for a penny, in for a pound," says the old adage—so said the lawyer. Popular he would be at whatever cost, and who knew, or could tell, where this popularity might end? He might start for the county ere long, and then —. Yes, it was prudent to conciliate; he would be, if he could, the "man of the people." Two more barrels were ordered; the lawyer seemed infatuated to his own ruin; the cheers had driven him mad. The mob had drunk his health in single X., he had drunk theirs in wine; the effects had been pretty equal. Drink, drink! — shout, shout! — nothing could be like it; the whole town—the young and the old, the lame and the lazy, came on the spot to see the grand goings on.

In the evening the lawyer determined to have a bonfire, and a grand display of fire-

works. He purchased all the stock of dame Short's squibs which were left after the previous Guy Faux day, consisting of a whole three-and-sixpenceworth, and they were popped and fizzed away in his honour. The remains of his own last canister of powder, with which he had wound up the sporting season, were given to some schoolboys, who took portions thereof in the palms of their hands, expectorated thereon, and screwed into a paste with their fore-fingers, and then formed into "wild-fires," which they placed on sticks and posts, and set fire to in gallant style.

The reader hath already been made acquainted with old Lot, the poaching tailor of our town. The latter had, some time before, mended certain fractures in the garments of the lawyer, particularly those which covered his nether man, for which he charged, as he always does, a very moderate price — barely enough for the labour. The lawyer, who studies and practises domestic economy, offered Lot much less than the old man considered himself entitled to. With his usual

characteristic and stubborn pride, the tailor refused less than he had charged, and preferred to lose all rather than acknowledge that his toils were not worth his demand. The circumstance was not forgotten by our old acquaintance, and it only slumbered to be revived the first opportunity. Of course the hubbub occasioned by the mob, and the squibs, &c. &c. brought out the tailor among the rest, though it was nearly at the close of the scene when he arrived. The lawyer had made copious libations to his own success, and as most of these were taken before dinner, they, in conjunction with those that followed, had made him somewhat "funny." When the tailor reached the scene, the lawyer was mounted upon the head of one of the empty barrels, having a huge bonfire in his rear, which showed off his shrivelled and smoke-dried face and withered figure to ludicrous advantage. His face was redder then than at any previous period of his life. The wine he had drunk, and the heat he was every moment imbibing from the fire, had put him in a glowing fervour from head to

foot, to say nothing of the ambitious hopes which had kindled within his breast—a flame that burned with no less intensity than those behind him, which threatened to calcine his vertebral column to a cinder.

His position was by no means a comfortable one, and he occupied it with considerable impatience, while his good friends about him were loudly cheering him after he had thus exalted himself. It was long before silence could be obtained, and the arch old tailor made it longer. He perceived the peculiar situation of his economical friend, and resolved to give him a full return for the late parsimonious refusal to pay for the repairs of his breeches. Lot has a way of his own in doing most things. He very respectfully took off his hat, and bowed low, and lower still, to the elevated lawyer. The latter was indeed surprised at this; such a manifestation of deference and respect, where he had only expected hostility, was doubly pleasing to him. For the first time in his life he resolved to do a bit of the generous. He summoned all his blandness and suavity, and

thus addressed the sly tailor, who was alternately peeping over his spectacles at his intended victim, and at the persons whom he meant to make his instruments in the forthcoming scene.

“My good friend Lot,” said the lawyer, “I was about to address our kind neighbours here on the subject of our pleasant and happy meeting this day, but I will claim their indulgence for a few moments, while I request you to do me the favour of drinking my health in a flowing bumper, as these worthy people have so repeatedly done.”

Here the candidate for popular favour most graciously and magnanimously handed to the tailor a goblet of wine. The latter replied,

“Lord love your honour, that I will as often as the best on ’em. Here’s to your honour’s health, and glory, and may your honour never want lots of money, nor the will to part with it.”

Loud cheers followed this sly hit at the avarice of the candidate, whose partiality to wealth was pretty generally known, and whose

late dispute with the tailor had been made public by the latter, who displayed his unpaid bill in his window, and occasionally gave a popular lecture thereupon to those who assembled outside in the evenings of summer when their daily toils were ended.

The lawyer apparently took the hint, and, rather than incur the hazard of losing his popularity, determined at once that old Lot's demand should be paid.

“My good friend,” said he, “on this joyful occasion it would be unseemly to have any reference to matters which might by possibility disturb the pleasures of the day. If I remember correctly there was something like a mistake between us not long since; but away with it, my good friend, do not cherish any unfriendly feelings on a day when I am most anxiously desirous of proving to my fellow-townsmen that I am their truest friend. Here is that which will correct the error, and now I hope we are all, as we should be, good and kind friends one towards another.”

“I hope so too—and I hope your honour's

humour will last," answered the tailor, as he counted the money; and when he found the sum correct, he coolly pocketed the affront, and called out lustily, "Three cheers for Mr. Shuter, three cheers for Mr. Shuter."

The mob encouraged the joke, and cheered away famously, while Lot addressed two or three of them in a whisper, and they instantly went off to the fire, which they heaped prodigiously till the lawyer was well-nigh roasted. "Hurrah!" cried the tailor. "My good friends," said the lawyer. "Three cheers more," cried the tailor. "Hear me for a few moments," said the lawyer imploringly, as the perspiration rolled down his face that ordinarily looks as if it had never perspired before nor since. "Shuter for ever!" shouted the tailor. "Good people," exclaimed the lawyer in despair, rubbing his back and shrugging his shoulders. "Shuter for ever, the *poor* man's *friend*!" called old Lot with strong emphasis. "Pray put the fire out," said the lawyer. "Long live the *generous* Mr. Shuter!" cried the malicious tailor. "Let me request," began

the attorney. "Hurrah!" continued old Lot. "Hurrah!" responded the open-mouthed multitude, who perceived the misery of their late persecutor, and enjoyed it; till at length, by the continued exertions of those who managed the fuel, the fire took hold of the barrel on which the lawyer stood, and he could endure his place no longer. With a look of horror he jumped amongst the crowd, who received his half-roasted carcase, and carried him in triumph several times up and down the street in front of his own house (I beg pardon, mansion), and when he had sufficiently wiped his brow, and recovered a due degree of temperature, he was placed upon another barrel, and the mob listened quietly for his speech. He thus began:—

"Gentlemen—hem! Gentlemen—unaccustomed as I am to public oratory—unversed as I am in the art of addressing public assemblages—unacquainted as I am with the best mode of obtaining the *vox populi*, or, to speak more intelligibly, the voice of the people, that is yourselves, gentlemen, for you will under-

stand when I say the people I mean you, my good townsmen—”

“Ay, ay, sir,” interrupted the tailor, “you always had a knack of saying one thing and meaning t’other.” Shouts of laughter. The orator looked very disconcerted.

“Gentlemen, I am rejoiced to see you so merry. Our good friend Lot is very facetious, and certainly I must admit my mistake affords a very legitimate subject for your mirth—ha, ha, ha, it was very good indeed—ha, ha, a very good joke—ha, ha,” (continued laughter from the mob). “But, gentlemen, although there is much reason, as I admit, for your mirth,” (renewed laughter,) “there is a time for all things,” (roars of laughter,) “and as I have no doubt you are all sensible a joke may be carried too far,” (increased laughter,) “yes, gentlemen, I say a joke may be carried too far,” (laughter continued,) “I say, gentlemen, I did not come here to be laughed at,” (here the shouts were redoubled, intermixed with clapping of hands and cries of bravo from the tailor.) When silence was in some degree

obtained the speaker resumed. "Gentlemen, I am desirous of explaining why I am thus induced to offer myself to your notice. I have completed my mansion," (cries of Who paid for it?) "Gentlemen, I paid for it"—(laughter,) "and gentlemen, as you all very well know, I was desirous of celebrating the event by entertaining all comers hospitably, and in the good old English style" (a cry of 'Sheeps' heads for ever!' from the tailor). The speaker was too much disconcerted by this remark, and the laughter that ensued, to proceed for some minutes. "Gentlemen, you know we have all great reason to condemn the conduct of our present representatives in parliament. You want an honest, upright, liberal friend, and supporter of the people like myself, gentlemen"—(Bravo! from old Lot, and roars of laughter from the people.) "Gentlemen, I am sorry to perceive that our old friend Lot does not appear to bury the past in oblivion as cheerfully as I wish to do. It is my wish that all that is past should be forgotten," ('No doubt of that,' from old Lot, and laughter from

the people); "and if, gentlemen, you will have the kindness to point out to me how I can be serviceable to you, you will find me ready to serve you by any means in my power," (shouts of bravo, and laughter, and cries of 'More beer!') "Let more beer be brought for my good friends."—"And plenty of it," said old Lot.) "And plenty of it by all means," said the lawyer with a very magnanimous air.

"And now, sir," said Lot, "as you have promised your services to us *all*, mayhap I may beg a small favour?"

"Certainly, my very good friend, certainly," replied the lawyer. "How can I assist you?"

"Why, sir," resumed the tailor, "it's but a small favour I have got to ask, and one that will cost you nothing. Does your honour happen to remember the shop where you bought the pair o' shoes that your honour wore when you came into this town the first time?"

"No, Lot, I can't say that I do. It is a strange question. — Why do you wish to know?"

"I'll tell your honour. It is now as near as

possible about five-and-twenty years ago, as I was sitting on my board at work, I seed a little, thin, half-starved fellow walk past the door, looking as if he wanted a dinner. I had a piece o' bacon and beans on the fire at the time, and I was a good mind to ask un to walk in, but somehow or t'other I thought as how he looked like a strolling player, more partic'larly 'cause he had a bit of a bundle in one hand and a hooked stick in t'other, and I don't much care to have they gentry in the house at all, so I let un pass on; but I thought on his hungry face all day long, and sorry enough I was that I didn't give un a bit. Well, your honour, my wife that's now dead and gone, goes out just afore nightfall, and she was main fond o' picking up the news, and when she comes home she said to me, says she, 'Lot, who dost think that little hungered creature was as looked just as if he'd 'scaped from a gibbet, that went past our door to-day?' 'I don't know, dame,' says I. 'I'll tell 'ee,' says she, 'twas our lawyer's new clark;' and, says my wife, for she would say her say, your

honour, as everybody knows, 'I'm blest,' said she, 'if I was our lawyer, if I'd keep ~~such~~ a scarecrow 'natomy as that in the house. I wouldn't be seen with un at a bull-bait, and I'm not very partic'lar in my company.' No more she was, your honour, but that's neither here nor there.

"Now when I think on that fellow that walked past my door with all he had in the world done up in a pocket-handkerchief; and when I look at 'Squire Shuter, the *poor* man's *friend*, and the master of a '*mansion*,' that ought to be called a'ter this day, 'Sheep's-head Hall,' I almost think I'm dreaming. But so 'tis, 'Squire Shuter' and the poor hungered clark is one and the same, and I only want to know where he bought the pair o' shoes that brought un here, for I think they were the luckiest pair that ever he had. He walked into a pretty good thing of it, and who knows, if I could get a pair at the same shop, but I might do the same?"

During the tailor's narrative the lawyer had been at various points of it tempted to fly the

scene altogether, but he was petrified by the old man's impudence, and the calm contemptuous titterings of his "very good friends" the "people." When the tale was concluded, an universal roar of laughter burst from the multitude, and the lawyer was fain to descend from his elevation, and take refuge in his "mansion." The mob drank the fresh supply of beer, burned the barrels, and departed to their homes. Old Lot was loudly applauded by his party, and the "mansion" has been called "Sheep's-head Hall" ever since, and will as long as it stands.

The lawyer's first attempt to gain the *vox populi* was his last.* He has never uttered a civil word to a man poorer than himself since, and never will. He rides on the top of a tall horse, or shuts himself up in his great coat in his lumbering phaeton, like a small oyster in a huge shell, and looks proudly and disdainfully at everybody but those he hopes to profit by. To them he extends his usual affability, and is graciously condescending. Every Sunday morning he has a good opportunity of venting

his scorn on the "people;" he goes to church, stands up during the whole of the sermon, and looks upon them with all the bitterness his harshly-lined features can express. On these occasions old Lot commonly faces him, and directs his eyes *over* his spectacles towards his late antagonist with all his characteristic slyness, though he never exhibits any indecorum within the sacred edifice. Old Lot is too sincere in his regard for the church for that. But as the lawyer approaches the vehicle which he calls his "carriage," the tailor slips nimbly up, and touching his hat with an affectation of respect, says, "Good morning, your honour." The man of law trembles with rage, jumps into his "carriage," and cries with a choking voice, "Home!" Old Lot looks round at the bystanders, who laugh as the pair of cobs are lashed into a smart trot.

In person the lawyer is, as the tailor's sketch of him five-and-twenty years before may lead one to expect, somewhat diminutive and contracted. He is, what is commonly called, a *little man*; but although what is understood

by the term "mean-looking," he is effectually pompous in his manner and gait. The latter is that of an old bantam-cock, who retains all the pride of his Lilliputian race divested of his youthful sprightliness. His features are harsh, and remarkably expressive of cunning. His restless eyes are ever rolling, as if to seek an advantage, and they are shaded by a pent-house kind of forehead, and brows formed of long shaggy hair, bearing the hue of a newly-made fracture in a piece of iron. Their glances are quick, shrewd, and often malignant. It is generally said in our town that he "sleeps with one eye open."

The lawyer does not stand high in the public estimation for his professional knowledge; but he has a managing-man, who is, as the people here say, "up to everything," and all persons seem to agree, that the two, if they "laid their heads together," would "make a fool of the devil himself." They are certainly famous at bills of costs, no men more so; they have established themselves as the best compilers of six-and-eightpences in this or any of the adjoining

counties. Other lawyers envy them. Some there are who attempt to rival them; but people soon find out the difference. Rivalry is out of the question, they stand alone, and will. Our jovial and aristocratic butcher says he will "back them against any pair between this, and that place where lawyers are said to go after they depart this world. He had a demand upon a neighbour, who is now gone where law cannot reach him, for "a shoulder of mutton, six pounds at five-pence per pound, two shillings and six pence." The demand was disputed, the butcher employed the attorney, the latter recovered the half-crown, and charged only sixteen pounds six-and-eight-pence for doing so, beyond the taxed costs of the defendant.

The lawyer has a daughter, who is a sad specimen of a spoiled child; not what is generally understood by the term of a spoiled child, for she is not of the "Pickle" school; but spoiled she is, nevertheless, to all intents and purposes. She has a kind heart too, and is a well-disposed little baggage naturally; but she

is corrupted by false education and baneful example. She occasionally exhibits traits of good sense and generous feeling; but they are turned into ridicule by those who should most cherish them. The people about her inculcate nought but personal vanity and worldly pride. She is taught to estimate herself too highly, to look scornful at all below titled men, and to despise any settlement without the appendage of a coronet.

The young lady has a sad time of it. She is loaded with every one of the multitudinous farrago of accomplishments that are forced upon young ladies of the present day, from poonah painting, and mezzotinto upwards. She is taught music, for which she hath no ear; singing, for which she hath no voice; and drawing, for which she hath no eye. Nine long years has she been trying to acquire the latter, under twenty different masters, who are every one condemned as stupid fellows, who are ignorant of drawing themselves. Her best productions are overgrown "Loves," like bloated toads, and roses like pickling cabbages.

The little lady is prone to sentiment, and hath a taste for maudlin poetry ; to her honour, however, be it said, she does not attempt to perpetrate any herself. She likes those specimens that relate to disappointed love and abused friendship, but she has taste enough to relish only those that come from good writers. This is only a private gratification, indulged when her friends (her parents, and relations) are absent. There is no sentiment in them. They hate it in others.

Her figure is not very attractive, rather of the dumpling cast. She indulges too much in eating, and too little in air and exercise. Her face is pretty, and the slut knows it ; but her cheeks, while they are round and full, want the colour of health. Where the rose and lily should reign, buttered toast and greasy pastry prevail. She has a pretty eye, and a roguish one too, with much of good-nature in its beamings. She is fond of romping, and has lately suffered a most melancholy bereavement in the loss of a younger brother, a sprightly imp, who was her faithful auxiliary in every species of

mischief. He is lately gone to sea. Since that event she has been more sedate, sighs occasionally, and looks sad. To this, and the example of her cousin, Miss Bays, may be attributed her taste for the dreary sort of poetry.

Her mother, Mrs. Shuter, is one of that good kind of people who are good for nothing. She is too much under the dominion of her husband to exercise a will of her own, even if she could be active enough to form one. Eating, drinking, sleeping, compose her enjoyments and pursuits, excepting a little bit of nonsense in the shape of sewing, called *needle-work*, just as an excuse for doing nothing.

RIVALRY.

“ A guardian angel o’er life presiding.”

THE reader will remember the *grand* party (so termed in our town) given by the fox-hunter, of which a description was attempted a few pages back. The result of that affair was to engender a spirit of rivalry in the breast of our *little* doctor, whose ire was great when he discovered the *éclat* enjoyed by his jovial friend. The little doctor is an ambitious sort of personage, and is particularly daring, and temerarious when his usual fits of indigestion have for a few days subsided. At such times we have not a bolder man in our town or county; he talks largely, and professes it in his opinion to be

“ An easy leap

To pluck bright honour from the pale-faced moon;”

and vows that he “ dares do all that may

become a man." People stare, of course, to see him in these humours; but that is the very thing he aims at, he delights in what is called by some "astonishing the natives." The greater part of our community vote him a madman, and keep out of his reach till he has committed some little excess in the shape of a few extra glasses of wine, which regularly "knock him up" as he says, and he is *non est inventus* for a week. The answer to the enquiries which his friends make after him is—"Master is very poorly, very poorly indeed—Missus has been up all night rubbing him, he had sich violent spasms." When the spasms have subsided, the little man is very harmless for a considerable period, and the good folks approach him without apprehension.

The rivalry that the little gentleman felt, was like that which induced the frog to burst himself in the attempt to swell his body to the magnitude of the ox. That is the doctor's business, not ours. However, the good lady who presides over him and his affairs, hath more prudence, and will not allow him to burst

himself; therefore they had sundry debates upon the important topic to the following effect.

The little man having taken a circuitous walk round the town one fine morning, as he usually does, to make it appear that he has an abundance of practice, and is visiting his patients, gathered a fund of intelligence wherewith to amuse his spouse on his return home. The chief part of this related to the fox-hunter's dinner-party, and burning with impatience to open the matter, he rapidly wiped the perspiration from his brow as he seated himself in his "blue room," and, drinking a glass of his lady's "home-brewed" to quench his thirst, he thus commenced, in reply to his wife's never-failing question on such occasions—"What is the news to-day?"

"News, indeed! my love. There is nothing scarcely talked of but that dinner-party, everybody is full of it. I'm sure I don't know why. One would think nobody else ever gave a good dinner, or could give one besides the Thryvewells. We, my love, have given some

elegant entertainments, and at a great expense too ; but they do not seem to be so much to people's taste—nobody ever talked of our parties day after day—I *should* like, my dear, to have a party soon that would astonish them all. I'll engage we can do it as well, at all events, as the Thryvewells can. I'm sure your taste, dear Bessy, is much superior to many I could name, and those who are the most talked of, and I think I could manage to lay a few of the stoutest under the table. What say you, my love ?”

“ I say,” replied the lady, “ that you shall do no such thing, so let me hear no more of it. *You* talk of laying men under the table, indeed ! *you*, who *know* that after you have taken one pint of wine, the *sight* of another makes you tipsy ! You know also very well, as *I* do to my sorrow, that whenever you exceed two or three glasses, you are always ill with the confounded spasms ; and do you think it can be any pleasure to me to have you screaming with your pains, till you wake all the children and alarm the neighbourhood ?

Or for me to be applying hot fomentations to you four or five hours together in the middle of the night, and to have servants kept up, and fires burning, and water boiling, and the house splashed and littered from top to bottom, till it is absolutely filthy with your messes? The last servant we had went away entirely because she would not lose her rest to be carrying buckets of water up-stairs for you, dragging her arms off; and the bottom of that nice new kettle for which I gave seventeen and sixpence (and a great bargain it was) has been fairly boiled out of it, entirely for your fomentations and stuff. And then there you are, for the next two or three days, walking about like a ghost, complaining of your chest, and of everything else about you; to say nothing of your messes of water-gruel, broth, beef-tea, and blue pills and blue devils into the bargain. No, no, James, I'll not suffer any more such foolery, take my word for it. This house shall not again be the scene of any of your drunken parties whilst I am in it."

“ Well but, my *love*,” the little doctor proceeded coaxingly — “ you know, my dear, that we must give a party soon, and why not now ? I am sure I don’t wish to cause you trouble ; and therefore we can, if you prefer it, have a very different one to that I proposed at first. I only wish you to share some of the praise of our friends as well as Mrs. Thryvewell, and *that* is but natural, you know, especially when I consider how much better you manage all that sort of thing than she does. You were quite right in not agreeing to my proposition, for I do indeed suffer a great deal from spasms after dinner-parties.”

“ Yes, indeed you *do* suffer !” retorted the lady, “ and you make everybody else suffer that’s near you. There is no living in the house with you after such things, you are so nervous, and cross, and unhappy. Besides, look at the expense of parties. Heaven knows how many dozen of wine would be drunk, could you have your way !”

“ Quite right, my dear, quite right. These things are very expensive. But shall we not

have a party in your own very elegant way? I am quite sure, if you exerted your taste as you have frequently done before, you would soon make people forget Thryvewell's affair altogether. How vexed Mrs. T. would be! I really wish you would, if only to annoy *her*; she seems so proud of her late display."

"Well," returned the lady, "I have no objection to give a party to oblige you, for indeed I do *not* see why Mrs. Thryvewell should have it *all* her own way. I flatter myself that I understand something of these things—more, I should think, than she can do, for you know she is not at all a genteel woman, James."

"Not at all, my love."

"On the contrary, I should say she was rather vulgar."

"Extremely vulgar, my dear."

"A woman of no education whatever."

"Decidedly; nothing can be plainer than that."

"Well, then, James, I *really* do not see why *I* should not succeed as well as *she* does."

"My dearest Bessy," replied the doctor,

who was determined to have a party, "by hook or by crook," "you will succeed much better, if you try."

"Well then, James, I will try. But mind, I shall have the conducting of the whole thing to myself. I shall put a stop to it if I have any of your interference."

"Oh! certainly—it shall be all done as you please, my love. You understand it so much better than any one else."

"Very well; then we will have it on Monday-week."

"Stay, dearest; Monday is my day for visiting the parish-patients at Uplands, you know, and I am generally very tired after my walk there and back; and I dare say you would like to have a good deal of music, and I should be hardly in key. Suppose we say Tuesday-week."

"Very well; on Tuesday, then, it shall be."

"How is our stock of wine, my dear? I'm afraid it's *rather* low—is it not?"

"Why, there are the remains of our last two dozen of port and two of sherry, that we

had before our last party, you know, James. I should think a dozen of each will be *quite* enough. I can make up the bottoms of the port bottles into a large jug of very capital negus, and that will do for the ladies, and it makes the wine go ever so much farther. You had better write to the wine-merchants directly, and be sure to tell them to pack it more carefully than they did last time. There was one of the bottles cracked then, and it was quite a mercy the wine was not spilled."

"I think, my love, we had better say *two* dozen of each. It is so *much* more respectable, and it saves *carriage*, you know. And what is left will last during your accouchement."

"Why, yes, to be sure, James, it *is* more respectable, as you observe, and it *will* last till I am confined; I never thought of that. Dear me, I wish these affairs were all over!"

"Don't you think, dear, it would be better if we had the party even a day or two later than Tuesday-week? The wine will have more time to settle, you know, after its shaking."

"Why yes, that is very true, James, I declare.

The wine will be all the better, if kept a day or two. We will say Thursday-week; it will be fit to drink then, I dare say, though I'm afraid all the crust will be off. That old woman's cart really ought to have springs to it; what with that and the rough stones they have put on the road, it is enough to break all the bottles. I must speak to her about it."

"Do, my love."

"And I must get her to buy me a piece of flannel, my head-flannels are all worn out. Dear me! what trouble these plaguy accouchements are. I hope I shall *never* have another."

"Don't say so, love, till you have given me a son. We have so many girls, you know they will require a brother by and by. I should very much like to have a son—just like myself; shouldn't you, Bessy?"

"You are a fool, James. There don't bother me any more, don't — I can't stop to hear your nonsense. There are those caps to make, and that piece of diaper to cut up, and Heaven knows what besides! I am never idle, I declare. And now comes this party. I had need

have the patience of Job, as some people say ; though if Job had had half as many of these matters as I have to endure, I doubt his patience much."

The lady left the apartment with a powerful sigh.

"That is a very extraordinary woman," said the husband to himself, after his lady had retired. "She calls me a fool, because I wish to have a son like myself! What *can* there be foolish in *that*, I should like to know? She certainly is very singular in her opinions. But I must write for the wine, or I shall hear more of them."

Great were the pains taken by these worthies to impress upon all parties, concerned and not concerned, the taste and magnificence that would be displayed at their party ; and great were the expectations formed on the occasion. Those who were invited were in ecstasy ; those who were not were in despair. The whole town was in an uproar, and busied in nothing else but talking of the event. The splendours of the past were lost in the splendours of the

future. The foxhunter became a lessened man in everybody's eyes : as he sank, the little doctor rose, and was happy. He was delightfully amazed at his own greatness, and, like Alexander, seemed to assume the god as he strode along the " High Street " with an air that expressed how much he detested walking upon earth.

THE TEA-TABLE.

. “Himself he on an earwig set,
Yet scarce upon his back could get.”

“If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they may pass for excellent men.”

THE eventful evening that is to raise the little doctor far above his contemporary, has at length arrived. We say at length, reader, because although the interval was short between the formation and execution of the plan, it seemed an interminable space of time to the impatient hero of the pestle and mortar. He dreamed of it every night, spoke of it every hour. It was his one idea for the time being, and excluded his more favourite notion, that he is the upholder of the dignity of a liberal profession, entirely from his brain. It was the last

thing that he discussed with his "Bessy" before he went to sleep, and the first that he cheered her with in the morning. He talked of nothing else all day long. "My party"—no two words in the language expressed as much as did this simple and brief sentence; when he uttered them, they breathed the most exquisite harmony in his musical ear, and touched every chord in his susceptible heart. It is said of him, that these words so unceasingly ran in his head, that when he was writing a label for some medicine that he was about to despatch to one of his patients, he wrote thus: "Two of these digestive pills to be taken at bed time—'my party.'" The name of the patient was lost in the vision of his party; but it is no bad hint to the latter, notwithstanding, and they will be wise to profit by it.

However, the evening has arrived, the company are arriving, and now, gentle reader, you and I, though not of the invited, will go also. Like Asmodeus, I will unroof the house for thee, and show thee that which passeth within, and "there is that within which passeth show."

Ah ! there goes the " head doctor ;" he is one of " the party." The old gentleman has donned his nankeens, and white gloves, genuine " Berlin " at one shilling per pair, and his " trusty and right well-beloved servant " the venerable blue coat hath been robbed of some portion of its remaining nap, which it could ill spare, and some bright, shining, span-new gilt buttons have been placed upon it. It is closely buttoned up, and conceals his elegant valentia waistcoat, an old friend of the washerwoman ; but the ends of his white cravat (so called because it is the colour of pea-soup) are streaming forward like a commodore's broad pendant. His shirt collar, of ample dimensions, almost reaches to his eyes ; his ear is wholly concealed by that and his hat, at a side view, and the sharp point of his protruding chin slips out as if it had cut its way through the wall of starched linen. His hat, by the way, hath a bit of a cock, reader, and, as you perceive, makes him look rather knowing. How his eyes sparkle ! He is alternately contemplating his own personal display, and the havoc he will

make this evening at the expense of his junior rival, for whom, between you and me, reader, and himself, he entertains the most sovereign contempt.

The Bishop of Burleigh's carriage stops the way; out steps the prelate's tall wife:—stoop, madam, stoop. Ah! there it is, rash woman! she will never bend to anything, and now hath demolished that enormous pile of muslin, flowers, feathers, and sundries, against the top of the doctor's low door-way. The lady is vexed—take care, bishop, better not stand too near; he thinks so, too, and goes off in a great hurry to seize the reins of his old and lusty horse, as if he feared the animal were about to *run away!*—a thing that never did, and never can happen: it is a physical impossibility. And there is the sly old tailor, Lot, at his side, assisting the right reverend in holding the horse's head, as if *he*, too, feared he would “start.” “So ho, there,” says the tailor; “be quiet, lad. Wo ho, there—be quiet, will ee?” The old horse, who would gladly enough be “quiet” if they would let him, looks as if he would

say, "What the deuce do you make this fuss about?"

The lady, hearing the exclamations of the tailor, has her attentions diverted from her misfortune, and turns about to inquire "What is the matter?"

"Oh! nothing in 'ticlar, madam," replies the tailor; "only your horse is a little fresh—hasn't got work enough, I 'spose."

"There," exclaims the lady to her husband,—"there, I always said so, I declare! and you see I am right; Lot says the beast has not work enough, though you are always complaining of what the horse does. Work, indeed! what were horses made for?"

The lady goes in; the bishop follows, not very well pleased with the tailor, for he knows perfectly well that he has been quizzing him and his rib all through the scene. The tailor enjoys his laugh with the bystanders. Thou art a wag, old Lot, in thy way; but it is cruel to jest at the expense of the unfortunate. That miserable horse is worked out of

his life already, and what will become of him now is a mystery that none can solve but time and the lady.

The old doctor approaches the door. Lot, who has something to say to everybody, makes a dead set at him. He touches his hat with mock respect, and smiles good-humouredly and slyly at the pleased air with which his obeisances are received. The doctor, like most of the worthies of country places, is much flattered by this same doffing of hats and ducking of heads; and he nods somewhat familiarly to his old acquaintance, who for a long-series of years has remedied all the disasters to which his garments have been subjected. The tailor, who hath a retentive memory, is the accurate chronicler of every pair of breeches the doctor has worn since his arrival in "our town." He remembers the colour, cut, the time they lasted, how many times they were mended, when laid by, when hung up, stuffed with straw, to scare away the rooks from the doctor's "piece of barley," and when stolen from their honourable

post to form the lower half of a "Guy," and burned, as all Guy Fauxes should be. This seems to be the natural fate of the doctor's breeches.

"Good day, Lot, good day!" exclaims the man of physic. "How d'ye do? how d'ye do? I hope you're well—you look pretty well."

"Ees, sir, thank ye, I be pretty well—I never takes physic."

"Ha! ha! Lot, you must be joking—must be joking."

"Ay, sir, ay," replies the tailor; "what can one do better?—nothing as I knows."

"Right, Lot, right! Well, how goes trade? pretty brisk, eh? Saving money, Lot?—hope so. Always save money; rainy day is sure to come, you know—sure to come."

"Ees, sir, 'tis," says Lot, drily; "but some folks won't care for't. I doesn't care much about it, nor trade ne'ther; I took a leaf out o' your book, sir."

"A leaf out o' my book, Lot! what's that, eh?—what's that?"

"Why, sir, I got tired o' work, and now

only does a *little*, just as *you* do, merely for the sake o' my *health*."

"Indeed, Lot! well, I'm glad to hear it! Had a windfall, perhaps—eh, Lot? How is it? only a little for the sake o' your health, eh?—how is it?"

"Why, sir, if I didn't *work* I shouldn't *eat*, and my health wouldn't be much the better for fasting altogether, would it?"

"Ha! ha! Lot—always joking—always joking, I declare!" exclaims the doctor, as he goes in. "Good b'ye, Lot—merry fellow!"

"Gentle dulness ever loves a joke!"

The bishop's old-fashioned gig is now wheeled away, and makes room for our curate's "four-wheel" and his pony, who, poor little unhappy wretch! would, if seen in Regent Street, be taken for one of the industrious fleas. The curate and his lady live just about seventy yards from the doctor; but the lady could not think of walking, "it would be so *very* ungentleel;" and the industrious quadruped is harnessed to drag his huge mistress—who, if put to the task, would be more capable of dragging

him—to the scene of her enjoyments; and, while she is revelling in festivity, he will have to discuss his musty hay till the hour for dragging her home. Such is his lamentable fate!

These seem to be the last of the arrivals; and you and I, reader, must embrace the present opportunity of slipping in ere the doors be closed, unless we actually make a pantiling-excursion, and descend through the rafters. Here we are!—keep behind that lady; she will skreen us, and two more if need be, from all observation. Now we are in, and can look about us. Great preparations have been made, sure enough! A new piece of oil-cloth laid down in the passage—I mean the “hall,”—to begin with. Yes, and the carpets have been all newly beaten, and rubbed with ox-gall, to revive their faded colours. The paint in the “blue room” hath been washed with soap-lees to refresh it, and the operation has been very successful. It was rather dingy before. The same process has been applied to all the paint in the “hall” and up the staircase. The brass rods are an innovation; the stair-carpets were

previously tacked to their stations, but the "party" must not see *that*. New rods have been ordered, "and very nice they look," the old lady from "the abbey" declares, who is "poking her nose into everything," as her hostess protests, and having a quiet quiz to herself. She knows all the alterations, and wishes to enlighten other people. The doctor's wife is upon the rack; in vain she tries to divert attention by an officious and fussy discharge of her duties as hostess. The old lady is determined to "let the cat out of the bag," as we say in "our town," and the bishop's lady and the curate's wife are enjoying the exquisite wincings of their *dear friend* with all imaginable good-nature.

"Allow me, Mrs. Thryvewell," exclaims the doctor's wife, "to take off your tippet: shall I place your muff on the table? There, now, *pray* come into the drawing-room; there is such a *nice* fire! and I'm sure you *must* be cold. Come along — come along!"

"Not at all cold, I thank you, Mrs. Assington, not in the least — quite warm. Dear me,

how busy you must have been ! These parties give one a great deal of trouble, don't they ? Hang the company ! I sometimes say, and so I'll be bound do you." (The looks of the party addressed sufficiently express it at this moment.) And so you've laid down a new piece of oil-cloth ; a very pretty piece it is, too, I declare—quite a handsome pattern ! Not quite wide enough, though—you're obliged to have so much of the floor painted ; ah ! yes, 'tis a pity 'tis so narrow ! But then the *wide* cloths are *so* expensive ; I dare say you got this *narrow* bit a *bargain*. La ! bless me, the paint is quite wet, I vow ! Dear me ! well, I suppose you hadn't time to get it done before this morning. I dare say you have been very much hurried ; you look fatigued, and more fit to be in bed. These large parties are a great trouble to people who are *not used* to them, a'n't they, ladies ?"

The bishop and the curate's ladies *feelingly* acquiesce in the remarks of the old lady, who, conceiving that she hath in some measure repaid the hostess for her insolence and presump-

tion in pretending to rival her son the fox-hunter, marches off in triumph to the drawing-room, where she has no sooner seated herself, and paid her usual compliments to the large party assembled, than she makes some new discoveries, which she as duly notes aloud.

“ Well, I declare !” she exclaims, “ you have been altering and improving with a vengeance. A new hearth rug ! well, it looks very nice ; I don’t think it’s a very capital one, though ; they make these things so showy now to what they used to, but I like ’em plain and good. My sons have got a very good stock just come from London, you ’d better have bought one of them. I see *this* is not one of theirs, I knew *that* the moment I saw it.”

The old lady might have added that she knew it *before* she saw it, for the doctor’s servant, who, amongst other qualifications, hath learned to “ fetch and carry,” had two or three days ago proclaimed the new purchase at “ *the* shop ;” and, indeed, all the preparations made by her master and mistress for the party, where they were duly discussed by the shopmen, re-

tailed by them to the customers, and thus became known to all within five miles of the limits of "our town."

The little doctor, who is very busy, and bustling in the performance of his duties as host, and who is welcoming his visitors with officious zeal, hears the old lady's oration by "fits and starts." He does not gather the remarks consecutively, but he hears quite enough to convince him that his triumph will be much lessened, and is heartily wishing the old lady's tongue had a blister on it. The dame is merciless. She knows not what the doctor wishes, and would not care if she did. She only knows that he is very presuming to attempt to eclipse her son, and that she will punish him for it as he deserves. On she goes again—

"Well! I shall find out all in time, I suppose. Why, you have got a new tea-urn, and had the piano French-polished, and new silk put in the front of it. La! you *are* smart—you always were a good manager, Mrs. Assington, and *really* you *have* made the piano look

quite another thing, it *was* a “dingy” before. Now, I dare say, you have done all this very cleverly. Didn’t cost much—Ah! well, you’ll tell me all about it some other time—never mind now—don’t trouble yourself, I see you’re busy, and hardly know which way to turn; I don’t wonder at it, I’m sure!”

The good lady of the house is on “tenter-hooks” all this time; but it will not do to exhibit her mortification. She will not allow her *friends* so complete a triumph, and she plainly perceives that the *dearest* of her intimates are enjoying the unkind cuts of the garrulous old lady. The doctor is cursing internally till he is nigh choking, and heartily anathematizes the old woman, and every old woman in existence for her sake. However, the tea is made, poured out, and ready to be sipped, and the old lady, who delights in Hyson and gunpowder, finds her attention diverted by the agreeable summons eagerly given by the agitated yet courteous lady who presides over the scene. You and I, reader, will take a peep at some of them.

There are people in the world, as thou knowest full well, who cannot ride a mile in a stage-coach, or sit five minutes in a reading-room, without letting every one about them know who and what they are. People like these may be said to constantly revolve on their own axis; their thoughts, like the waters of a fountain that are ejected perpendicularly and fall into its own basin, invariably spring from and tend to themselves. You will remember to have seen many such, reader, doubtless, and if you will now look around you, you will see more.

The good folks of our town are, generally, people who have one idea, and that in some way or another relates to themselves. All their topics of conversation are made to turn upon themselves, and their doings. Northcote describes a ringer, who, when asked how many good ringers there were in the town, always replied, two. "Who are they?" "Why, first, there's myself, that's one." "Well, who is the other?" "Why, there's—there's—egad, I can't think of anybody but myself." Just so

it is with these sages, and they speak of themselves for the same reason that Sancho gave for speaking of his ass—"There I thought of Dapple, and there I spoke of him."

Uncle Toby now, for instance, had *two ideas*—one was his bowling-green, and the other Widow Wadman; the old gentleman who inhabits "the abbey," Mr. Thryvewell, has one idea also of his *bowling-green*, and another, that his own fire-side is the best and most comfortable place in the universe. There is the old gentleman; look at him attentively, and you will read the last idea in his countenance. He is evidently not unhappy, for that it is not in his nature to be, but he is fidgety and restless. He is making comparisons. The arm-chair which hath been placed for him by the fair hands of the hostess (who, by the way, shows a vast deal of attentive, and troublesome kindness to her company), the arm chair is not so comfortable as his own easy seat at home. He shifts and sidles, purses up one corner of his mouth, drops his head, and swells out the ample folds of fat under his chin by the pres-

sure of his neck-cloth, till he bears somewhat the same appearance as a fine old male turkey when he begins to get into a rage. To use one of our homely similes, he "looks like a fish out of water."

The good old lady, Mrs. Thryvewell, has her one idea, which is, that nobody in the wide world can fatten ducks or cure hams like herself. There is the curate, whose idea is, that he is a man of science, the *first* man of science of the age; and there is his lady, who has an idea that she is the mother of all the *pretty* children that are in the kingdom. There is the fox-hunter, whose idea is a combination of riding and "fifteen-two and a go." There is his wife, whose idea is a large family. The little doctor's idea is *himself*; his wife's idea is that matrimony and happiness are not perfectly synonymous.

There is the "*head* lawyer," whose idea is a bill of costs, and gentility; his wife, whose idea is that a lawyer's wife, who has to study economy to maintain gentility at the least possible outlay, has no sinecure, and his pretty

little minx of a daughter, whose idea is decidedly that she is the prettiest creature in the room and out of it. Mrs. Bays, the lawyer's sister-in-law, has an idea that her daughters are the most meritorious and most injured girls in the universe, and that her family is next to nobility, if not nobility itself. Miss Bays has an idea that the world is a wilderness, and all the people in it fools; her eldest sister has an idea, viz. a husband; her youngest sister, ditto, ditto. And there are some ten or a dozen other young ladies whose ideas exactly coincide with the last mentioned.

Dr. Slaimour's idea is money. The fox-hunter's brother has one idea — business. The Bishop of Burleigh has an idea that he is somebody, he does not know who, but certainly not himself, and that he can write sermons. The bishop's tall wife hath an idea that she is the wife of a very clever man. There is the major, whose idea is that of hunting. There is the naval captain, whose idea is that he is a hero, and a very ill-used man. The naval lieutenant's idea is mischief-making, and that he has

a very pretty wife. The wife of the latter gentleman has an idea that matrimony, though not quite what she expected to find it, is better than dress-making, and that children are great bores. There are four or five gentlemen who have property and spend it in farming ; their idea is that they are agriculturists, and consequently have a right to be discontented with the country and everything in it but themselves, who are an abused and injured class. There are some old ladies whose ideas are, that they have pretty daughters, and that it is very strange nobody marries them.

All these vapid notions are swelled out by those who respectively entertain them into immeasurable importance. They are very worthy people for all that, but they are bad companions for anybody, and particularly for each other. Strangers do not like to be surfeited with the honey of their hives ; sweets are apt to be cloying. I, for instance, reader, would sooner hear the wild screams of a cracked bagpipe, than listen to the eternal hum of those who prate only of themselves and their own con-

cerns. There are many others who have the same objection to such unprofitable topics, and you, reader, I think, are amongst the number—yès, I see you have no relish for these sort of people; but we are obliged to endure them at times, and the only comfort we have under the affliction is, to revile them inwardly. I do not approve of blasphemy, or seek to excuse the abuse of expletive, but there are times, you know, reader, when the bile will rise in spite of one's teeth.

For each other, these people are the worst associates to be found; every one is too fond of his own idea to listen to that of his neighbour. They are hermetically sealed up in their own inestimable qualities. No sound is so melodious as the harmony of their own voices. The curate derides all art that comes not from himself; the bishop thinks all wisdom is condensed into his sermons, and that without them men would be lost, and little boys undone. Now sermons are very good things, but there are those who assert there are “sermons in stones,” and those who think there must of necessity

be other things than sermons. Not so the bishop. He thinks there is but one thing needful in the word — that is, sermons — and that he is, the only sermon-writer in it. If he has an opportunity, he will say as much before the night is out.

There are more people, reader, present at this grand party than have been particularized, and more perhaps to come; but they are all of the same stamp and metal. All have their one idea. On this subject, however, enough has been said. Now proceed we to the business, or, as the host and hostess have it, the *pleasure* of the evening.

They are, as we have said, assembled round the tea-table, that nursery of scandal and fountain of gossipry, where people sip ill-nature with their warm-water, and devour character with their bread and butter. The table is amply provided. There are cakes of all denominations — plum-cake, buttered-cake, sweet-cake, plain-cake, lardy-cake, Yorkshire-cake, Banbury-cakes, Coventry-cakes, Bath-cakes, and last not least, Sally Lunn-cakes. What

more would you have? I will not ask you what less. In addition to the varieties of cakes there are biscuits of all descriptions, Abernethy's, captains', sweet biscuits, and plain. There is a trio of plates covered with thin transparent slices of bread and butter, and three others, each containing a mountain of toast swimming in oiled butter. There is an abundance of dry toast in plated racks, and plates of butter done up into little "pats" ornamented with sundry swans, wheatsheaves, &c. &c. for those who prefer to "spread for themselves." Cream there is, too, in plenty, and various sorts of bread—rye-bread, new bread, stale bread, white bread, brown bread, fancy bread, and household bread. If "stuffing" his guests will give the little doctor *eclât*, he will have it sure enough. Now comes the tug of war. They are about to begin the attack: "Cry havoc, and let slip the" hounds of gluttony.

"Lay on, Macduff,
And damned be he that first cries hold, enough."

Had we made a sentence particularly applica-

ble to the present scene, the last and the first might have been included.

An affected young gentleman, in a highly starched cravat, and a buff waistcoat with gilt buttons, receives his cup of tea from the lady with a most determinedly polite and gracious air, and immediately after tasting the same, thus addresses the little doctor :—

“ I believe, Mr. Assington, this is a chemical process, tea-making is performed by the operation of simple infusion.”

“ Oh ! certainly,” the doctor replies, charmed at having an opportunity of displaying his scientific acquirements, “ certainly. It is one of the simplest operations of that divine science to which we are so much indebted, and which, though it has advanced so triumphantly, and with such amazing strides, during the last century, may yet be justly considered in its earliest infancy. The discoveries of those who have cultivated this sublime science have enriched mankind beyond calculation ; but the world is scarcely grateful enough for their exertions in its behalf ; indeed, *we* men of science

have to contend with much of illiberality and prejudice. In future generations, when people become more enlightened, things may be different, and I trust they will. At present we are never duly rewarded, or even thanked, for all our toils for the benefit of mankind."

"That, my dear sir," the Bishop of Burleigh observes in a measured tone, and with a dogmatic air, "is the too common lot of all men of learning, talent, and genius. Whatever may be the pursuit in which they employ themselves—however great may be the benefits they confer upon their fellow-creatures, they are almost universally neglected, and left to waste their years in privation and toil, and perhaps die in obscurity, martyrs to their noble exertions in behalf of those who spurn them. It will be scarcely credited, that my sermons, although they were the produce of many months of labour and much research, as you must be already aware from the perusal of them — although they were made to embrace every topic necessary for the edification of the rising generation — although they were also peculiarly

calculated for the benefit of the generation which hath risen — although they were sent forth into the world by a member of that church which is by Law and Reason established as our own, they have not, I regret to say, and you will wonder to hear, they have not met with that encouragement which, without arrogance or partiality I may, although their author, say is due to them. I mention this circumstance as an instance in proof of your observation, my dear sir, and a melancholy one it is—one which you would scarcely credit if it did not come from myself.”

The bishop concludes with a depression of the chest, very much like a sigh, and with an air that expresses how much he expects his auditors to be astonished, and grieved. All present agree that it is a very surprising, and not less lamentable case; and hypocritically affect to sympathise with the prelate.

“I am sorry to be obliged to give an additional proof of the soundness of our friend’s observation,” our curate murmurs in his own mournful, and softly hesitating voice, distin-

guished for its modest tone; "but I have recently experienced some of the neglect which talents will receive at the hands of those whose duty it is to encourage improvement. I had invented a method of improving the achromatic telescope, which I submitted in the first instance to Dollond; but he thought nothing of it. This, I naturally concluded, resulted from his narrowness of mind, and the jealousy which a man like himself might feel at any improvement which would cast his own into the shade, and I regarded it with a philosophical allowance for the weaknesses of our nature. But I confess my astonishment *was* excited when I found the Society of Arts refused to notice it. There was not even an observation made in reply to my paper on the advantages of my improvement, by which I had solely been enabled to detect that the late supposed comet was only a nebulous cloud.* Every person present at

* This discovery was certainly made by the worthy curate with his own telescope, as Peregrine Reedpen cheerfully testifies, not more than a week after it was published in one or two periodicals.

the society's meeting seemed disposed to consign my improvement to oblivion.

“Another remarkable instance is this. I have for many years turned my attention to the construction of organs, and I have at length succeeded in inventing a means of augmenting the tone of these instruments beyond my own expectations. I wrote to the bishop of this diocese, proposing to superintend the erection of an organ of great power, and upon my principle, for our church. I will only say that such an instrument, if made, would far exceed all the organs now in existence. I fully developed my principle to the bishop, and expected my offer would be gladly accepted. I was, however, mistaken. My plan was, rather superfluously in my humble opinion, submitted to some organ builders in London, Flight and somebody, but I forget who, and it is not of the least consequence. These persons, prejudiced as they would very naturally be in such a case, actually went so far as to say that an organ on my principle would have no tone at all. It is

wonderful indeed, what men of science have to contend with !”

Everybody pities the worthy little curate, the more because they have a regard for “our town” beyond any other, and would rejoice much to see a new organ set up in our church, notwithstanding we have a very good one. Such a thing could easily be managed by subscription, and every one would have jointly and severally the credit of promoting the interests of the place, the advancement of science, and the encouragement of genius. What a glorious opportunity, too, for testifying their zeal for the church ! And besides, to see their christian and surnames in the lists of subscribers at full length—“ ’Tis pleasant sure to see one’s name in print.” The bishop’s misfortune meets with little *real* sympathy, it is only a thing to be treated seriously in his presence, and laughed at when he is away. Nobody is over fond of sermons to little boys, but a piece of music is another thing.

“ Very illiberal, indeed, of the bishop. Who

would have thought he had been such a man? *Really* it is a pity such a man should hold so high an office. You see what the church *loses* by having such illiberal prelates. Dear me, how talents are scorned! Well, I *never* heard such a thing. Is the bishop a clever man? I should *think* not. This is no proof of his cleverness, certainly. I am *quite* surprised. He *cannot* be clever. Oh no—interest, I dare say, was the cause of his promotion. Oh yes, you may depend, Lord and Lady —— were his best friends I am told. Ah! I thought so. You see how it is—’Tis time these things were altered. We *must* have a change soon. Certainly, Reform is *loudly* called for. What a pity that *such* a man is not displaced, and a *really* clever man put in his stead. What is his revenue? Immense—nobody can tell *how* much. Oh! no doubt—shameful—scandalous! I will venture to assert that many men of greater talents would do the duties much better for a fourth of the sum. Yes, indeed—that there are—oh! hundreds and hundreds”—

All these observations, exclamations, and

other ations are the joint contributions of the whole company uttered with *great*, and you, reader, will admit exceedingly *just* indignation. The whole is wound up by the hostess, who casts a most complacent look at the curate and the Bishop of Burleigh, and exclaims—

“Yes, indeed, I think *I* know men of *very* great genius and learning, who would be an honour to such offices as those held by the bishops, and who are but ill recompensed for their labours. We have not *far* to search for such men, I believe.”

This observation is *loudly* agreed to, *nem. con.* The Bishop of Burleigh holds his head high, and receives the compliment as if he deserved it. His wife holds her head higher, and looks justly proud of her “clever man.” The little curate affects a bit of the bashful; he pokes his chin out of his neckcloth, hems, and draws his chin back again; casts his eyes modestly towards the ground, as if to conceal his self-complacent smile. The curate’s wife looks as if insufferably angry that she is not a bishop’s lady.

The little doctor now adds his own personal experience of the neglect of the age to men of science. He thus begins—

“ I have also made it my study to benefit my fellow-creatures, and I was not disheartened at the onset by the recollection of that desire, seemingly so common in the world, to detract from the merits, and to stifle the exertions of the sons of genius. You must all have heard of or seen that dreadful insect called the ear-wig, and of its terrible mode of insidiously creeping into the ears of both young and old, whence it works its way to the brain, and devours it for its subsistence.

“ For seven years have I laboured to invent an instrument that would extract the horrible insect after it should have penetrated the external orifice of the ear, scientifically called the *meatus auditorius*, and, to my great satisfaction, I completed one that would perform the necessary operation without much pain, and with no injury to the organ. I repeatedly tried the experiment myself, in the presence of my wife and servant, and they were both satisfied

that it was properly done ; but you shall judge. I procured a sheep's head of my butcher, and I selected a very powerful earwig from a currant-tree in my garden, and placed his nose near the ear of the head. The voracious insect no sooner saw the orifice than he fled towards it ; but, meeting some obstruction in its attempt to get in, which I did not stop to examine, I removed the insect, and, taking a gimlet of the largest size, I bored a hole into the head sufficiently capacious for my purpose. The earwig rushed in. I took my extractor, I applied it to the hole ; it closed upon the insect, and I had the happiness of drawing him out, and beholding the monster struggling in the jaws of the extractor, which firmly held him by the tail, and, to the satisfaction of my wife and myself, as well as of my servant, I crushed the wretch to death !

“ Well, ladies and gentlemen, I forwarded a full description of my instrument to the most eminent men in the faculty, and you will hardly believe that I am serious when I tell you the substance of the replies I received from

some of them; others did not notice my discovery at all. However, to *convince* you that I am not jesting, I will produce one of the answers I had from a surgeon who bears a great name—how he merits it I will leave you to judge, after seeing his letter; and this epistle will be found a fair specimen of all that were sent to me.

‘ SIR,

‘ In reply to your letter, requesting my professional opinion on the subject of your newly-invented “instrument for the extraction of earwigs from the brain,” I have to say, that the idea of applying it to that purpose is certainly an original one, whatever may be the principle on which the instrument is constructed. The invention, however, is needless, inasmuch as, from the nature of the organs of hearing, no insect can penetrate to the brain. I mention this fact for your information.

‘ At the same time, being aware that there is a certain species of animal, which might not be improperly termed an earwig, that some-

times injects its poison into the heads of those who listen to it, I should recommend that your inestimable talents and scientific acquirements be directed to the means of guarding the ear against such reptiles, and, if possible, of withdrawing the venom after it may be injected.

‘If you succeed in this, you will, as you say, “deserve the gratitude of mankind.”’

“There, ladies and gentlemen, what do you think of that? is not it a specimen of the wild prejudice and envy which induced the world to pronounce Harvey a madman when he made known his discovery of the circulation of the blood? But *I* have no reason to complain, when I remember how that great man was persecuted. His doctrine of the vital fluid was not appreciated during his life, and my earwig extractor, will, it is too probable, meet the same fate. My discovery, like his, will be productive only of posthumous fame, and with that I must be satisfied.”

The whole party eagerly admit that Mr. Assington’s case is extremely hard. They do

not hesitate to condemn all the faculty as fools, for their opinion respecting the little doctor's earwig extractor is in direct contradiction to the popular theory of earwigs, which every old woman in "our town," or any other, would hold it rank heresy to dissent from. The old lady from "the abbey" is particularly indignant, and exclaims, with some vehemence, "Well, I declare! that is hard, I must say! Why the doctors ought to be made ashamed of themselves! Did anybody ever hear such a thing? Well, I never—I'm quite beyond my patience, I declare!"

"Never mind, my dear," her husband quietly observes, "never mind; you are not gone far, if you are over the bounds."

"Don't tell me, Mr. Thryvewell—don't tell me! I say earwigs do get into people's brains."

"No doubt of it, my dear."

"You're always full of your jokes, Mr. Thryvewell; but I don't mind what you say a rush!"

"That's true."

“Now don’t interrupt me again, Mr. Thryvewell, or I shall be vexed. What Mr. Assington says is quite right, and I’ll prove it. Didn’t Farmer How’s son, poor little dear fellow! have an earwig in his ear? and didn’t it eat up all his brains, till his scull was as empty as a worm-eaten nut? Tell me that!”

“No doubt his head was empty, my dear; he wouldn’t have been his father’s son if it had not.”

“Well, I never! — Mr. Thryvewell, don’t be so provoking, *don’t!* But it’s no use talking to you, not a bit; I’ll say no more.”

“Thank you, my dear.”

The old lady is pretty considerably chafed, and “looks unutterable things” at her lord and master, who is enjoying her perplexity. She continues to be ruffled, and has a little difficulty in keeping her seat. From the peculiar motions she makes, one might fancy she sat upon something very sharply pointed; and she pulls down the front of her sober-looking brown silk dress at intervals with sudden and violent twitches with one hand, while she thrusts a

corner of her handkerchief into her mouth with the other, and bites the white cambric till it comes off in threads. But fresh game is started in another quarter.

“La! Mrs. Assington,” Miss Rosebelle inquires of the hostess, “what *do* you think I’ve heard? Nothing less than *this*—Miss Harper is going to make her appearance on the stage! Do you think it at *all* likely?”

“By no means,” the hostess responds, in a tone and manner intended to convey her belief that nobody could be found weak enough to give Miss Harper an opportunity.

“*I* should not be surprised at *anything* Miss Harper could do,” Mrs. Snarl observes.

“Nor I,” her husband, the lieutenant, and chemist, replies. “She is the most impudent girl I ever saw in my life.”

“*Is* she *indeed*?” says Miss Shuter, the attorney’s daughter, casting her arch eyes towards the lieutenant’s wife. “She *must* be a strange creature, Mr. Snarl. Pray who *is* Miss Harper?”

“No person that *we* can know, I dare say,”

says her aristocratic father, raising his bald head to its utmost altitude.

"I should have thought everybody knew her," the hostess remarks; "I am sure she takes pains enough to be known."

"Possibly she may, Mrs. Assington," the lawyer answers with immense solemnity, "but *our* society is very *select*, and we should regret to have our daughter acquainted with any one who could entertain ideas of the *stage*."

"I have no doubt her *intention* is to get on the stage if she *can*," the curate's wife remarks, "for she is so *dreadfully* fond of admiration, and all that sort of thing—I am *really* sorry for her poor mother. The *end* of it will be very shocking, I'm afraid."

Everybody coincides with this lady in her very comfortable anticipation of the end of Miss Harper's career.

"They tell strange tales of her already," Lieutenant Snarl observes. "They say that Lord ——'s son has been very successful, indeed I have heard she has given him the best proof in the world of his success. They say

it is sent to — to be taken care of at his expense."

"Dear me, how shocking! Disgraceful creature! vile hussy! I always thought it of her. I must confess *I* am not deceived. Nor *Y*. Nor *I*, not a bit. She was always so bold. She ought to be hanged, or worse if possible. Oh, certainly. Nothing is bad enough for her."

These are the exclamations which follow the Lieutenant's piece of scandal from various persons of the indignant and sagacious company, and they are uttered in a chorus of virtuous horror.

The odds are fifty to one that the whole tale is an invention of the generous hero that vend- ed it. Miss Harper is by some persons considered a very superior young lady, and these persons are those who know her best. She has unhappily offended the Lieutenant, by declining an invitation given her by his wife, and hence his animosity.

"Mr. Assington," enquires the old lady who was so ludicrously desired by the chemist to administer her anti-spasmodic draught to "the

thing born”—“Mr. Assington, pray tell me which you think best for me, dry bread, or bread and butter? I don’t take much butter, you know; a *leetle*, just to moisten the bread, for it’s so dry alone; but Mr. Slaimour has been telling me that butter is very bad for me. Is it so?”

The old lady raises her ear as close as possible to the lips of the oracle, who is determined, if he can, to cry down any opinion given by the head doctor, and replies, “Certainly not, Ma’am, certainly not; never mind what *some* people say, bread and butter is exceedingly good for the stomach—it acts upon the villous coats as a poultice, and destroys or prevents inflammation in that organ. I have no doubt that the extremely rare occurrence of inflammation of the stomach, which we scientifically call *gastritis*, is entirely owing to the frequent use of bread and butter. Take as much butter as you please, never mind what other people say, do as I tell you.”

“Mrs. Thryvewell, will you allow me to send you another cup of tea?” the hostess asks

of the old lady, who has been sullenly silent since the snap with her good man.

“No, thank ye, Mrs. Assington, not another drop for me, I’ve had *enough*.” The last word is pronounced in such a manner, that it seems to mean more than *tea*—let that go.

“Mrs. Shuter, shall I have the pleasure of pouring you another cup?” The answer is in the negative. “Mr. Shuter, will *you* take another cup?” “I think not,” replies the proud and idle lawyer, with about the same air as that in which King Leopold refused the crown of Greece, and for pretty much the same reason, viz. the consideration is not adequate to the trouble.

“My dear Miss Shuter, will you?”

“La! Mrs. Assington, one can’t drink tea all night. I’ve taken *one* cup entirely to oblige you, I would take a dozen more if I could, but *really*——”

The young lady’s arch tone and manner set the good people in a roar of laughter. The hostess perceiving the article of tea is at a discount, requests her husband to ring for

the servant, who is ordered to "clear away the things," and pick up the fragments of cakes and sundry other vestiges left by the destructives ; and the company collect themselves into little knots, of three or four, to whisper certain quizzical remarks about those near them, or to be more ill-natured still, till the gentleman and lady of the house inquire if they "would like any music?"

MUSIC—CONVERSATION.

“ Music hath charms.”

READER, thou art an amiable creature whoever thou art, and a most delightful companion. Thou hast borne the last scene like a stoic. Thou hast good sense for what may be termed the difficulties of society, a happy humour for the social moments, and good but not boisterous spirits. Thou art able to bear with enthusiasm thou canst not feel, follies thou canst not help discerning, and art ever ready to enjoy the present. And that quiet smile of thine, how well it becomes thee, the most patient of listeners, and the most gentle of lively companions. There's yet another scene or two to witness, but I fear thee not. Of any other

I should have my doubts; but thou art equal to anything. I venerate thee—but listen.

Tea, as we have seen, is over. The host and hostess, who are determined to exhibit their accomplishments, make their inquiries respecting their guests' inclination for music in that manner which plainly expresses "you shall have it whether you like it or not." The little doctor and his wife like it themselves, and fancy they understand it; have it they will, and the visitors have nothing to do but to submit to their fate with pious resignation. Heaven preserve me from a man that carries a flute in one pocket, and a bundle of music in the other; and a woman who thumps wires through the medium of ivory with knuckles as red as beef-steaks, and fingers puffed out with fat till they are like short sausages. However, here we have both, and we must make the best of them. "Sure such a pair were never seen, so——" Ah, reader, I see you know the quotation, and are anticipating me.

The worthy little doctor and his wife are the chief vocal and instrumental performers in our

town. The curate would rival them if he could, but *his* noises are luckily confined to his own house, and the gallery of the church. Thank the saints he cannot carry an organ in his pocket—he would if he could—and his wife, though her organs are often sounding in alt at *home*, cannot sing in public. There is comfort in that. But our entertainers are “accomplished,” and this is to be a night of harmonic misery,—yes, you may look surprised, I say *harmonic misery*. You look at me, reader, with those quiet eyes of yours, as though you thought I had not “music in my soul.” I ought to have. I have had enough in my ears since I came to this place. But I confess, that *amateur* music is not quite to my taste. No matter, they will not consult my taste but their own. The lord and lady of the mansion set the laudable example to the remainder of the company — they are going to begin. Silence.

The lady seats herself before a well-rubbed piano, with a new scarlet star, as hinted by the inquisitive Mrs. Thryvewell, and a very wiry voice. She plays the symphony to her James’s

favourite song,—“Haud awa wi’ Jamie.” The little man looks very great during this preliminary operation. He stands behind the music-stool with an air that denotes he is fully aware of the important situation he fills. He raises his head as high as possible, hems two or three times as if to clear his voice—not appearing to succeed, he coughs slightly. That will do, he lifts the ends of his shirt-collar, and adjusts the points of his cravat. His head undulates to the symphony, his left-hand is placed in the pocket of his trowsers, the right is placed within the breast of his waistcoat, his head is thrown back as far as his brief neck will permit, his eyes are raised to, and fixed on the ceiling, and—off he goes.

“I ganged wi’ Jamie frae Dundee”—

He goes on with great self-complacency, till he reaches the lines

“The lavroc mounts to hail the moru,
The lint-white swells its throat,
But *neither* is sae sweet, and clear
As *Jamie’s* tunefu’ note.”

then he is on immeasurably good terms with himself, and removes his eyes from the ceiling to the company, to ascertain if they think the same. He finishes by a most indescribable succession of notes, which he intends for a magnificent flourish, is duly thanked by all, tittered at by many, and openly sneered at by a few; but the last he does not luckily comprehend. The curate's wife is one of the sneerers, for she is a lady of consequence, and will "always speak her mind."

Miss Bays, the soul-blighted poetess, looks her speechless wonder at such lamentable "trifling;" her simple sisters say, "it is very pretty, very pretty indeed;" Miss Shuter, with an arch look, proclaims it "divine," and observes, "how well Mr. Assington's voice would suit the stage," an observation that draws forth the warmest acknowledgments from the performer, who is made happy for the night.

Then there is a rustling, as if the company were re-adjusting themselves in their seats. Miss Shuter has won the doctor's gratitude,

and it is evinced by his giving her an opportunity of exhibiting her vocal and instrumental acquirements, and he doubts not but he is making a very suitable return for her previous kindness. The hostess joins him in his entreaties; but Miss Shuter has a cold.

“I can’t indeed, I assure you. I have a very shocking cold, and have had for a long time. I am quite hoarse. I caught it walking in the garden one damp evening ever so long ago, while my cousin was making poetry to the moon that was in a hazy cloud, and had a whitish circle round its face.”

“Oh! but you must, indeed you must.”

“’Pon my word I can’t sing, Mrs. Assington, and, between you and me, I won’t try. Dear me, Mrs. Assington, did you ever see the lines my cousin made? I suppose not. What *do* you think that fool of a girl likened the moon in a whitish circle to? You’ll never guess, not in a week, or a year, or as long as you live. I’ll tell you—to a very beautiful woman turned grey all at once. There, what *do* you think of *that*? Hush! don’t laugh *too* loud, or

aunt will guess we're talking about her or her poetess, and she'll be so mad !”

Many of the company now entreat the young lady to play, as she cannot sing, for they have not had an opportunity of judging of her acquirements before, and are anxious to know what she can do, having heard much about the great expenses of her education. Notwithstanding her reiterated protestations of not having “practised a note for a long time,” she is at length prevailed upon to play, if the little doctor will “accompany her.” The young lady, apprehensive of her own performance, wishes to have somebody making a noise while she is playing, to conceal any blunders she may make. She sits down to perform a piece that somebody wrote with the intention of picturing a storm, and a storming affair he has made of it, sure enough. Miss Shuter makes it still worse. She thumps and runs, and runs and thumps, in terrible style. The sounds that emanate from the unhappy piano in some parts of the piece, are pretty much like those that would be produced by a magpie hopping from

one end of the keys to the other. However, the "Storm Rondo" is finished, and the due acknowledgments are made by the company to the lady, who instantly after look at each other, and turn up their noses in contempt of the performance. The little doctor is loud in his praise of the "execution" of the Rondo; the young lady protests—

"I should never have got on at all, if you had not accompanied me."

"Extremely obliged, Miss Shuter!" the host exclaims, with a smirking bow and a smile that speaks his felicity.

"Well, she's no great things, after *all*!" remarks the curate's wife to the bishop's lady.

"I never thought she would be," is the reply.

"No, nor I, I must confess," the former observes; "but, after all one has heard about her, one *might* have thought she could do better than *that*. I declare my lovely Angelina, that has only learned a *leetle* more than a year, and is only eleven, could play *quite* as well."

“ Oh ! but Angeline is a very clever child, you know.”

“ You are very kind, I’m sure ; I have certainly done all I could to make her so.”

“ No doubt of it, my dear ma’am,” the bishop’s lady replies, adding, as she rises to speak to Mrs. Shuter, the mamma of the back-bitten young lady, “ and you have not done much either.” This is an “ aside ” to Mrs. Shuter. The lady continues. “ My dear madam, how exquisitely your dear girl performed that rondo ! ”

“ Do you think so ? ” asks the pleased mamma ; “ *really*, I thought she did not do it so well as I have often heard her.”

“ Perhaps not ; she might be a little nervous, but it was beautifully done ! Ah ! my dearest Miss Shuter, we were just speaking of you and the sweet way in which you performed that delightful piece ! Are you quite well, my dear ? ”

“ Perfectly well, thank you, ma’am ; I hope I have the pleasure of seeing you well.”

“ My dear Georgina,” Mrs. Shuter observes

to her daughter, "I do not think you played at *all* well to-night; I am sure I have heard you play *infinitely* better."

"La! mamma, how could I play with such an accompaniment? That man knows no more of time than nothing; I was never so mad in my life—quite put me out altogether! And then, *if* you had been exposed to his breath from that abominable flute as I was—oh! how sick you *would* have been! I'm sure I was sick to death; I could hardly sit, I assure you—I *really* thought I should have fainted!"

"My *dear* child," exclaims the fond mamma, in an agony, "how sorry I am that you were exposed to such a *dreadful* annoyance! I hope you won't be ill—do you think you *will*, my love? I wish we had not come! I shall never forgive myself, I declare, if you are ill!"

"Oh! stuff, mamma! I shall be very well, don't fear. It was bad enough while it lasted, but not much now it's over. There, don't make a fuss—I hate a fuss!"

"Excuse me, my dear," the bishop's lady smilingly observes to the young lady, as she

retreats to the other end of the room saying to herself, "What a bother these people make about their children! Such nonsense!—I wish they were all in the Red Sea!"

Another young lady is now entreated to play the eternal and infernal "Battle of Prague," or, as the old gentleman of "the abbey" more properly calls it, the "Battle of *Plague*." Mr. Assington accompanies her *ad libitum* on his flute; and so well do they keep time together, that he is squeaking out the "cries of the wounded" when she is thumping "God save the King" as if she would beat his most gracious Majesty to a jelly. This is also pronounced "very fine," "beautiful," and so forth. Then sundry displays are made by one or two other young competitors in the lists for musical fame; and *then*—ay, then, indeed—then comes the grand feature of the evening.

• Somebody calls on the hostess for a song. Now, to do this lady justice, she *never* has a cold, or, if she has, it is all the same—she won't own it; sing she will, if she is as hoarse as a bull-frog. Ask, and you have directly

—no excuses, no nonsense, out it comes at once. The request is hardly made ere it is complied with.

She takes her seat. See, all are silent, you might “hear a pin drop.” Great are the expectations of some. She is the Catalani of our town. She begins—Hurrah! there, off she goes! I guessed it “by all that’s horrible!” I knew it, reader, by all the “blue devils” that ever haunted me or may haunt me, and I feel them coming on me now as thick as hōps! “*Tum ti tum tum*”—oh! those infernal notes of preparation! Now it comes, the symphony is over—listen! “Hurrah for the bonnets of blue!”—yes, *that’s* it, sure enough. I told you so. Oh! that I were out of hearing, or without hearing! How she exalts her voice—ugh! there was a scream! Did you ever hear the like? She has heard Mrs. Wood, and is determined to beat her out of the field, if she break a blood-vessel in the attempt; and she *will* break one yet, I hope—I beg pardon, *fear*, I mean.

“’Tis good to be merry and wise.”

There, reader, hearest thou *that*? Oh! that she would be wise, and leave off singing, and she might then be merry for ever.

“Here’s a health to Charley, the chief of the clan!”

What means that glance at the tall young sprig of the “emerald gem of the western wave?”

“Although his brave band be but sma’.”

What an elevation of the voice was there!

“It’s gude to be honest and true.”

Does that nod of her little husband’s head mean assent to the substance of the line? There, now she is off again to the very top of her lungs!—and now, thank Heaven! it is over.

“Thank you, Mrs. Assington, thank you!”
“Beautiful!” “Sweet!” “Delightful!”
“Fine!” “Never heard anything so—do sing it again!” “Yes, *pray* do!” “You must!”
“Oh! dear, do; we shall be *so* disappointed!”
“Encore!” “Let me entreat!” “I never heard it sung *half* so well before!” “Nor I!”
“Nor I!” “Oh! nor I!” No, nor anybody else!

There—there! yes, there she goes, by all

that is unbearable! Off again! a second edition. “Tum ti tum tum — ‘Hurrah!’” You groan, reader; well you may. See how they laugh at her — taking liberties with her behind her back — and how delighted she looks! how her head inclines to the rises and falls of the odious tune! and how her hands are lifted nearly to her ears every time they can be spared from the keys for a second or two! Oh! Vanity, Vanity, how thou blindest the whole of us, in some way or other! “Hurrah for the bonnets of blue!” It’s over; she has perpetrated the deed — she is convicted of her second offence. Applause, applause, applause! and again they mercilessly urge her to be guilty of the like.

“She won’t do it again; she can’t be such a——”

Stop, reader — don’t be too hasty; you don’t know what she can be, therefore say nothing about it.

“Encore! encore! encore! *once* more, Mrs. Assington, *only* once!” “Dear me, I shall be so sorry!” “Really, you have the best

voice — Lord ha' mercy, how I wish I could sing like you !” “ So do I ; I 'm sure I would not require to be asked so much.” “ Ah ! you *good* singers always require so much pressing !” “ Mr. Assington, pray do you ask Mrs. Assington ; I shall be quite vexed if she does not comply ! La ! it 's nothing to be asked three times ; I 'm sure, when I was last in London, I heard Mrs. Wood encored three times, and *really* I don't think Mrs. Wood's voice a bit better than——”

There, reader, look at her now, and see what she can do. May I be everlastingly deaf, if she is not about to begin again ! “ Tum ti tum tum !” there it is once more ! She is hard at it, indefatigable in making a fool of herself ; and her ass of a husband standing behind her ready to turn over the leaves in ecstasies, thinking everybody is in earnest, while they are both laughed at by all that are in the room. Their *friends*, too, do not laugh in their sleeves, for they are not even at the pains to do that. “ Hurrah for the bonnets of blue !”—wilt thou ever forget that song, reader ? She has exe-

cuted that unfortunate ditty three mortal times. You shudder, reader; so do I, I am sick. A little brandy, you say. It is necessary indeed, reader; you might have put a worse thought in my head. We will go to the doctor's side-board, for we are invisible, you know, and will help ourselves. A "*leetle*" drop more, reader —ah! we are a trifle better now, and can look about us. What is to come next? More music, of course! more music — more music still!

Four hours have we now passed in this delightful manner, reader. You look as if you wished yourself at home, but look at the old gentleman from the abbey, Mr. Thryvewell. What does his countenance express? This, be it known, is the *first* time he has ever been here, and, like the Chinese traveller, who went to an English fox-hunt, he is wondering if anybody ever go twice.

It would not be worth while to particularize all the deeds that have been this night done. The only means of self-defence that I have on such occasions, is to fall into a reverie or

waking dream, while they are howling, and thus escape the infliction of their torments. At first I was scarcely able to do this, and when I did I was reviled and despised because I did not join in the commendations at the end of each piece. They said I had "no taste," and they were right, I had none. I penitently confess my faults with becoming lowliness, but as I had not a taste given me by nature, and could not, insensible creature that I was, acquire one; there was only one thing to be done, at least I could think of no other, which was, to "assume a virtue though I had it not." Habit does wonders. After a while I could plunge into my reveries, and when all around me were applauding and admiring, I could mechanically open my mouth in applause and admiration as well as the best of them, without knowing what I was about. I have often rejoiced in the stratagem, it was my only means of self-defence, if I had not adopted it I should have been driven to suicide, or I should have been hated, and persecuted by every soul in the town.

But to return. The music is over for a time, after every one has committed some dreadful act worthy of transportation, and now they draw into knots of four or five, or more, for "conversation." The little doctor's wife affects subjects of taste and sentiment, that is to say, sometimes when there is a dearth of matter for scandal, and the usual gossip, and when her husband is not immediately in the way. There is not much taste in him, which she perfectly well knows, and, therefore, to inflict her pathos upon him, would be to cast pearls to pigs. Critically speaking, if one were called upon to speak critically on the subject, it might be said she is not so mature in judgment as in years. It has before been said, how long she has stood at "eight-and-twenty;" she will never get any farther if she live till she is ninety. She has read considerably, all sorts of things, "Mrs. Chapone," and "Harriette Wilson," "Mason on Self-knowledge," and "Paterson on Bunnions," "Pamela," and the "Whole Duty of Man," "Paris on Diet," and Pamphlets on pastry, Essays on

moral duties, and *Ecarté*, and novels, romances, poems, gardening books, magazines, and penny periodicals without number or end. Scott, and Byron, of course, are her favourites. She remembers passages from all, which she quotes as occasion offers, and she treasures up these little scraps as citizens hoard the shells they pick up on the sea-shore at Margate, to show they have been there. She is an enthusiast, and cannot sometimes prevent her emotions from an outbreak, particularly when her husband does not exhibit a quantum sufficit of feeling or sympathy in her favourite topics of taste and sentiment.

The party being now divided into small circles, each proceeds to discuss such matters as suit them. The head doctor, the little doctor, Mr. Thryvewell, and the representatives of the agricultural interests, are talking politics, and reform. The Bishop of Burleigh and the curate are advocating the interests of the church, in which they are joined by the head lawyer, who will be a "people's man" no longer. The naval lieutenant, and the naval captain, are

“fighting their battles o’er again,” very much to the edification of the old and young ladies who are sitting near them, and who listen with wonder and admiration to their deeds of glory. The emerald islander hath his ears open for the latter worthies, and ever and anon shows his acquaintance with such concerns, by putting in some sly, quizzical cut, or some dry matter-of-fact hit that quite disarranges the fabric of the tale invented by the heroes, who are much discomposed thereat.

That emerald islander, by the way, discomposes the whole of us occasionally. We don’t know what to make of him—he plays the deuce with us. He laughs at all our prejudices, abuses our pork, makes wry faces at our beer, turns up his nose at everything, and is not at the pains to hide it. As was said of Paddy Carey, “His tongue is tipped with a bit of the brogue, but the devil a bit at all of the blarney.” Blarney indeed! “he would not flatter Neptune for his trident, nor Jove for his power to thunder.” Oh! how we hate him, and with reason too; does anybody like

to be quizzed, I should like to know? At all events *we* don't, and we won't have it. He had better go somewhere else, or—"we will do him a mischief." Ten to one, reader, you will see a specimen of his quiz before the night is over, and you can judge for yourself if we have not cause to hate him.

The little doctor's wife has her own circle. She is surrounded by the tall young lady from the abbey, the embryo clergyman that sojourns with the Bishop of Burleigh, the young lady the said embryo aspires to, the lieutenant's wife, Miss Shuter, and some others of a like stamp. The two married ladies, be it observed, are noted for being vixens, and they are discussing the powers of gentleness and feminine softness. You need not smile, reader, this is not to be deemed paradoxical, or inconsistent; it is one thing to be practically gentle in real life, and another to be theoretically so in a party.

Mrs. Thryvewell is at the farther part of the room, talking to an old lady of her own stamp

about the propriety of furnishing the poor cottagers' wives and children with spinning-wheels. This gives the lady of the house an idea. She does not know the nature of the debate between the two elderly ladies, and does not want to know it, but she has heard the word spinning-wheels, and that is enough for her purpose. She will spin something out of it if she can. She proceeds—

“What a beautiful moral there is in that sublime fable of Hercules and the distaff! It teaches us that strength may be subdued by tenderness, and that mental power shall not be laid prostrate before might and muscle. It shows us that the mind of woman will take its natural position, and assert its moral power; and the events which are daily transpiring in the world at the present time, prove that this is in fact not a fable. View the late occurrences on the Continent. A large society, called the San-Simonians, has sprung up, having for its object the establishment of the rights of woman, and who is there that will dare assert

that we are not equally as well entitled to our privileges as the opposite sex? If any such there be, let them not——”

“Come here by any means,” the emerald islander exclaims from the other side of the room; “they may depend upon it, their situation in this place would be very uncomfortable. It would not be at all good for their health—do you think it would, Doctor?”

The little doctor grins in apparent agony, but wisely holds his tongue. The lady who is thus interrupted smiles at the islander, and then winds up by asserting “that the power of gentleness must prevail, however great the opposition, and that the mind of woman will take the station it is entitled to.”

“Pray, madam,” asks the islander, “is the power of gentleness, as you call it here, what O’Connell terms legal agitation?”

The lady looks a little vexed, but makes no reply. She knows it is of no use. The ladies about her would abuse the author of the interruption, but they are afraid. They, however,

agree with her in all she has said, and the young divine is afforded thereby a fair opportunity of exhibiting his devotion to his own fair one, and his gallantry to the sex in general.

“The moral power of beauty,” he exclaims, “must be evident to all. Beauty refines our nature, purifies it from its grosser qualities, and supplies the imagination with lofty types of excellences. It is an emblem of goodness and divine love. In contemplating beauty, the soul becomes exalted, and the heart expanded. It may be compared with the entrance of a beauteous temple, which though you cannot see that which is within, leads you to fancy an infinite variety of the lofty and sublime; and those pictures that are formed in the mind have the faculty of refining the thoughts as they are created. Oh, beauty! who can limit thy sphere? By what standard of taste art thou to be estimated? Thou art the essential grace of nature—the essential grace of——”

The emerald islander's ears are open; he catches these last words, and now he will have

some fun. He whispers the little doctor, "Mr. Midgham is talking of essential *grease*—is that correct?"

Away skips the little doctor across the room towards the young clergyman, and arrives there before he has gained a sufficient increase of ideas to proceed. The doctor observes, with a self-complacent air—

"I beg pardon for interrupting you, Mr. Midgham, but essential *grease* is not a scientific term; there are essential *oils*, for instance, the oil of cloves, which is sometimes exhibited for the toothache, and is also given in aperient pills to prevent——"

"Heavens! James," exclaims the little man's wife, "how can you be so stupid? You are quite a fool, and a brute into the bargain. Mr. Midgham was eloquently pourtraying the moral power of beauty, which he so sweetly termed the essential grace of nature. It is a subject which you can never comprehend, you are only fit for oils and greases, and such filthy things."

The doctor affects to laugh; but perceiving the face of his wife to be growing more and

more red, and not wishing, it may be, for any practical illustration of the powers of gentleness, he apologizes, and rapidly withdraws, somewhat crestfallen.

“ Did you ever know anything so provoking ?” the excited lady asks. “ I declare it is quite shocking to see a man without the least taste or feeling. Do, pray, Mr. Midgham, proceed, if you are not too much disgusted. I assure you I am quite distressed at such an interruption ; do go on. He is gone out of the room now, I hope ; Heaven forgive me ! I was going to say, I hope he will never come in again—but it is so distressing to be obliged to pass one’s life with a person who has no soul. I confess I lose my patience a little when he is like this. But do go on, pray.”

The other ladies unite in their expressions of sympathy, and all entreat the young divine to proceed, which, after receiving a sweet smile from her his heart holds most dear, he does.

“ I was observing, I believe, that beauty was the essential grace of nature, and it is so ; it is the one charm of life to those who can feel and

appreciate its worth—but how few are they? It must be worshipped in deep devotion—in lofty sentiment; it demands the fullest homage of the heart and understanding; but with these demands it is easy for those to comply who can feel and understand its excellences. On those who do not, beauty in all its radiant simplicity and native loveliness is lost. Its chief influence, which may be said to consist in imperfect revelation——”

The emerald islander is at work again. He hath been whispering to the curate's lady, who walks up to the young divine at this moment, exclaiming with much vehemence—“ Dear me, Mr. Midgham, you astonish me! I declare, if Mr. Mard heard you he would be very angry; I really ought to tell him, and will; for you who are so soon to become a clergyman—for you, I say, who have been educated so long and carefully in the Christian religion by Mr. Mard, and who have had the great advantage of the example of my husband constantly before you, for you to cavil at religion and Revelation is shameful!”

“Indeed, madam”—the horror-struck young man earnestly asserts—“indeed you have quite misunderstood me. I was not discussing any point of divinity, and——”

“I am more surprised than ever, sir ! Do you mean to insult me ? There is no misunderstanding, sir, I assure you. My attention was called to your very improper subject for conversation ; but I forbore to interrupt you until you shamefully found fault with Revelation because it was, you said, imperfect ; and you have the assurance to tell me, sir, that you were not discussing points of divinity. Did I not hear you, when I was talking to Mrs. Mard, and did not others hear you speak of *divine love*, and the *temple*, and worship, and devotion, and all that, sir ? Not talking of divinity, indeed ! I am quite astonished ; I had always thought differently of you, sir ; I shall acquaint Mr. Lovenoy with your behaviour.”

During the continuance of this oration, the unhappy young parson and all the ladies have been in vain trying to “put a word in sideways,” as our phrase goes, in his behalf. Until

the indignant lady had said her say, that was impossible; and now that she is quiet, all the female friends of the embryo divine are trying to dissipate her erroneous impressions at once, at the very top of their lungs, and with all the desperate energy of women who are determined to be heard. The scene is one of noise, babble, and "confusion worse confounded." Babel itself is rivalled in clamour. The other parties are quickly broken up, and everybody flocks around the disputants.

The lady whose piety has been outraged is vehemently determined not to be convinced, if she can help it. It is a fine opportunity of showing her warm support of Christianity, and it may make some noise abroad. If it (should) ever reach the ears of the bishop of the diocese, her husband's preferment is settled. But there are five or six to one; she cannot hold out long, though she die hard. The young lady whose plighted troth is the property of the luckless wight of a parson is furious; her eyes open wide, her mouth wider, and her hands—I would bet her a new cap to a shoestring that

she longs to prove the powers of gentleness by tearing the very eyes out of the curate's wife! Her hands are energetically employed in suiting "the action to the word," and her tongue is not a whit less industrious in suiting "the word to the action." The good lady of the mansion is an able second; Miss Shuter is alternately laughing and remonstrating; the tall young lady, Miss Thryvewell, is looking very black and rating very loud; the other young ladies are all active; and the young divine, who has been fairly thrust into the background by his warm female defenders, in their eagerness to get at the curate's wife, has mounted himself on a chair, where he is most solemnly preaching at his opponent, and enforcing every sentence (not a word of which can anybody hear but himself) by squaring his elbows and lifting his arms to his head, and then "flumping" them down, as old Mrs. Thryvewell calls it, with great violence.

The amazed husband of the frantic causer of all this uproar and the lofty Bishop of Burleigh now interfere; everybody interferes—all

talk, all gesticulate, but nobody listens, excepting you and I, gentle reader, and that son of mischief, the emerald islander, who stands up against an end of the piano nearly bursting himself with laughter.

Now the uproar gradually subsides, and the din has ceased altogether. The combatants are reconciled, apologies are made and accepted. The curate's lady wipes the perspiration from her brow, the young divine sits down to calm his fluttered spirit, his beloved one and his female friends console him as soon as they can get breath enough, and the little doctor marches up to his wife with the air of a gallant bantam, and whispers in her ear, "This comes of your sentimental stuff and nonsense; I knew how it would end." The lady turns round to give a reply in her own "gentle" style; but the doctor is wise, he has skipped away to the other side of the room.

All the people laugh, and wonder what is to come next. The little doctor, who is very anxious to restore harmony amongst his unruly guests, smirkingly proposes that they shall

leave off conversing, and have a little more music.

“ Oh ! yes, by all means—by all means, Mr. Assington !” exclaims the *head*-doctor, “ by all means ; I second that motion. Suppose we have a glee.”

“ Oh ! dear, yes,” our curate softly murmurs, with inward delight ; “ I should like a glee very much ! Ladies, I hope you have no objection ?” (“ Not in the least,” “ Most happy,” &c.) “ Mr. Assington and gentlemen, I hope you have none ?” (“ No ! no ! no !”) “ Well, then, we will have one by all means.”

“ Come, come, Mrs. Assington,” the *head*-doctor cries, exultingly, “ come along—no excuses—you must play. We’ll have ‘ Drink to me only with thine eyes.’ Your husband, ma’am, Mr. Lovenoy, and me—we shall do it. *Sweet* thing, isn’t it ?”

The lady assents, the gentlemen consent, and away they go. Such clearing of throats during the preliminary ! such hemming and using of handkerchiefs. All is silent now. The lady sounds the key-note at Dr. Slaimour’s

request, to give him a start; it is re-echoed four or five times by his old-ladylike voice; the curate bows his head to catch the note, and merely murmurs it; the doctor raises his eyes towards the ceiling, throws back his head as before, sticks his hands in his breeches-pockets, and runs up and down a dozen notes to show his skill. Now they begin in earnest—they are off. “Drink to me only with thine eyes, and I will”——halt.

“Sadly out of time,” the little doctor says.

“Not me, Mr. Assington,” replies Dr. Slaimour.

“I am sure I thought I was right,” observes the curate.

“Let’s begin again.”

“Hem! hem! hem!” Now they are off again. They get as far as the end of the second line; the head-doctor is gesticulating most ludicrously, and some of the young ladies laugh outright. They halt again, and are somewhat discomposed. The young ladies were “only laughing at—they were only laughing at—at—la! why nothing at all!”

A third attempt is made, and fails, because the curate has forgotten the tune, and the little doctor has forgotten the words. Oh! reader, you looked at me with some surprise when I said this was to be a night of harmonic misery—what think you now? They will go on again—yes, they are beginning: but look there—look at the door! it opens, and behold an angel of light in the shape of the doctor's servant, who comes to announce that "supper is ready." Heaven bless thee, girl! thou art our deliverer. This piece of information is agreeable to more than you and me, reader, and it is followed by a general rush to the room in which the meal is prepared.

SUPPER.

“ The tender morsels on the palates melt,
And all the force of cookery is felt.”

“ I will praise any man that will praise me.”

THE doctor's dining-room is an apartment of moderate size, wainscotted from floor to ceiling, and painted sky-blue ornamented with sundry streaks of white. Somebody told the little doctor, or he had somewhere read, that the late Carlton Palace had a blue room, and the little man immediately conceived the great idea that he must have a blue room. He had his dining-room, which had been of a homely white ever since it was built, daubed all over with indigo. His wife declared it was too dark. It was painted with a lighter coat, a dull unmeaning sort of colour, wearing the aspect of what is

termed a "leaden eye." The lady considered this too monotonous and uniform; the doctor was in despair. The painter was called in, and a consultation held on the important subject. The painter is a man of taste, as we have before noted, gentle reader, and he suggested that the room should be enlivened with sundry streaks of *white*, which, he said, would "make it look like *blue and silver*."

The happy idea was rapturously caught by wife and husband, who both declared the painter to be a man of great skill in his way. The white streaks were added, and the room remains a lasting proof of the painter's talents, and the owner's taste.

The table bids fair to be well supplied. To begin with, there are lots of boiled trout, taking a most refreshing swim in a delightful pool of melted butter; fried ditto, waiting only to be handed out of their present resting-places to the plates of their devourers for a shower-bath of the same balmy liquid. Three couple of haddock there are, one pair on each dish, with their eyes ready to jump out of their heads,

looking alarmingly ferocious, and devouring their own tails which are skewered down their throats.

You will observe, reader, that our's is an inland town, and consequently not always very well supplied with fish. This happens unluckily to be a time of scarcity, and the little doctor has been at work with his rod and flies, and has done his best to remedy the deficiency by ransacking our mill-stream. Some of the troutlings he has whipped out are of very tender age, it must be confessed, but "all is fish that comes to his net," and he is one of those who fancy "little fish are sweet."

The curate, having tasted some of the unhappy little fry, observes—"These, I presume, are of your own catching, Mr. Assington; you are an excellent sportsman, I understand."

"Tolerable, tolerable," the doctor replies in a tone and with an air that imply "the best in the world."

"They are most delightfully done," the Bishop of Burleigh remarks, for he likes to compliment his hostess. The lady's head in-

clines towards him with all due grace in acknowledgment of his praise, which is re-echoed from mouth to mouth nearly all round the table.

“They are much too small, they ought not to be taken,” the lieutenant whispers to the captain. “Sportsman indeed! he ought to be fined.”

The captain nods assent, but most unmercifully crams the “little dears,” as Miss Rosebelle has just affectionately termed them, into his huge mouth as if they were sprats.

“Do look at Mrs. Assington’s dress,” the bishop’s lady exclaims, in a low tone, to her friend, the curate’s wife; “it is quite off her shoulders—quite indecent, I declare!”

“Horribly so—vulgar in the extreme!” is the reply. “I wonder a woman of her years, and the mother of a family, does not know better; she ought to be ashamed, really! Such a dress would be all very well for my dear Angeline, but in a great stout woman like her it is *too* bad. I wonder how people can dress in such a way, I’m sure *I* couldn’t.”

“ Oh dear no, nor I; I should be ashamed to be seen.”

Each of the ladies calls the attention of those friends who are near them, in a sly manner, until it is pretty generally noticed that Mrs. Assington's dress is “ shamefully indecent.” Meanwhile the lady is goodnaturedly assisting her treacherous friends to whatever they may like best, and the host is, as the foxhunter observes, “ terribly polite.” The little fish are devoured. Enter, a round of beef boiled; sirloin of beef roasted; quarter of mutton dressed à la venison; ham, with a piece of white paper curled into ringlets, and placed on the knuckle, like a night-cap; fillet-of-veal stuffed; and lurking behind these are two boiled legs of mutton, and a roast loin of pork. These dishes have an accompaniment of currant-jelly, capers, caper-sauce, melted butter, melted butter, and melted butter again, and vegetables in abundance.

“ Ah !” exclaims the foxhunter, rubbing his hands, “ this is the game for me — what say you, Captain? This is the food for men;

none of your fish-bones for me—I hate picking so unprofitably.”

The captain’s head nods again ; he is quite ready to agree to anything and everything that may be said or done ; but he is sparing of words while the table is so well filled. His time for speech is not yet arrived. A general and dreadful attack is now made ; clatter, clatter, plates and knives, knives and plates—cut, cut—chop, chop—gobble, gobble ; all is din and havoc. The inroad made upon these substantial dishes, at the solemn hour of *midnight*, too, is wonderful to all but—those who make it. If the multitude that were fed upon the loaves and fishes had been possessed of stomachs like these people, it may be doubted, with reverence I hope, if that miracle could have been performed. Thank the stars ! they will all have headaches for it in the morning ; there is comfort in that. It is the only consolation you and I have, reader.

The fragments of the huge joints are gathered up and carried out. They are superseded by an ample supply of geese stuffed with sage and

onions, and reeking with the fumes thereof; fowls boiled and roasted; turkeys stuffed, and surrounded by sausages; a huge chine of pork, three feet long, and four inches deep in solid fat; a sucking-pig, with some parsley stuck in his mouth to amuse him; dishes of pickled pork; another ham; some greens, and sundry other abominations, terminating as before with bowls of melted butter and sauces.

On they go again, as ferociously, reader, as if they had not eaten a morsel for a week. "More melted butter"—"A little of that sauce"—"I'll trouble you for some gravy"—"A piece of that fat"—"Thank you"—"Beautiful!"—"Delicious!"—"Excellent!" "Another cut if you please." Gobble, gobble:—ugh!

The hostess's brewing has been drunk by all, sneeringly complimented by many, and praised by few. The cookery has received its due share of applause. Not a word has come from the captain during the whole scene, but his silent eloquence speaks more than (all) the loud-tongued clamour of the others. They have

settled the poultry—now comes brandy—then pastry—then cheese—then port and sherry.

The ladies now begin to sip the “capital negus,” made from the bottoms of the port-wine bottles by the “clever woman,” their hostess. They also have recourse to eating little cakes and sweetmeats, cracking nuts, and various other intellectual amusements. One would think they have had supper enough without protracting this gormandising scene; but they do not think so, sweet creatures! Lord Byron said, I believe, that he could not bear to see women eat, but that was carrying the joke too far: such a remark would have come with a better grace from a Brummell than a Byron; it savours too much of affectation. I do not presume to be a Byron; be it known therefore I do not object to ladies eating, I do not mind seeing them eat, and rather than the dear souls should go without, I would take upon myself the task of feeding them. I was going to say I would turn cook, sooner than reduce them to the extremity of fasting, but I am not an Ude. However, I

have a great objection to see women gluttonise, and as you appear to have the same feeling, reader, we will look another way.

Before we proceed farther, reader, I will take the liberty of asking you a question, and I will rely upon your candour for an impartial answer. Do you think it was absolutely necessary, after what you have this night seen, and what you have seen before, for that enterprising traveller in petticoats, Mrs. Trollope, to go across the Atlantic ocean, to discover people who shovel their food into their vast mouths with the tops of their broad knives? I won't trouble you to reply now, but think of it; we may meet again, and when you think of this one question, do pray consider if the said lady need go to our respectable brother Jonathan, to find out a dozen other things that *she* so wisely discovered *only* in America? We have not time now for any particular discussion of this topic; but you may depend upon it, reader, there are many hundreds of people now living, who can easily detect a mote in the eyes of their neighbours, but cannot see

a timber ship full of beams in their own; and there are people too, as you have ere this discovered, it is likely, who "think they are thinking," and are egregiously deceived therein.

The gentlemen of our party are now busy with undiluted wine. Some of them are talking politics, for we of "our town" are most of us of opinion, that we understand politics as well as any, and better than many who are paid to understand them. It would be well for the nation, and all the world, if we had the ruling of this country's affairs. Things would not be long as they are now, I'll engage; we would have an alteration, and that soon. But no more of this at present. Should you, gentle reader, not be altogether tired of "our town," and at any future period wish to know more of us, we will show thee higher game than that we have aimed at here. We will prove to you there is mettle in us, more than you may expect, and if you have derived amusement from what has been said of "our town" in these pages, and would like to pay it another visit, you shall have still more. We can play

such tricks as make men laugh, and angels weep, I promise thee, in the matter of politics.

Some of our gents are anticipating the amount of duty on hops, and are making bets thereon, as is their usual custom prior to the "picking time." Some, the Bishop of Burleigh, for instance, and the curate, and the embryo divine in particular, are talking theology. The captain, and lieutenant, whose mouths are never opened but at somebody's cost, are equally employed in drinking and scandalising. The lawyer is talking of trespasses in the tone of a judge. The old gentleman from "the abbey" is slowly sipping his wine, and making comparisons with it, and his own excellent stock at home. The misses are whispering of sweethearts, or talking of pieces of music and albums. Mrs. Thryvewell is turning up her nose at everything as before. The fox-hunter thinks it is all very dull, and unprofitable, because there is no cribbage out of compliment to the clergy, and his good lady is wondering if her "baby wants her."

Our conversation is usually noisy at set par-

ties, and sometimes not pre-eminently good-natured, at least it might so appear to strangers; but we are a candid people, and if our neighbours do, or say, or think anything that we think they ought not to do, say, or think—we speak of it, and condemn it too, accordingly. When a given number of friends meet, they discuss the merits of the absent. This is but natural, or it seems so in “our town,” for we are so used to it, and use, as we say, becomes second nature. In other places people may be very different, all towns are not alike, but we have our peculiarities.

The supper, which the host has had the honour to place before his friends, has had the good-fortune to meet with their expressed approbation. All parties are in a good flow of spirits, and they have just alighted on a subject on which every one has something to say. This is a young lady who has not accepted an invitation to be of the party; she has therefore displeased the hostess, and as the latter is present, they make her quarrel their own, the more especially as the absent lady may be

very reasonably supposed to have thrown some offence on all, jointly, and severally. It is likely, if they meet the offender to-morrow, where the doctor's lady cannot behold them, they will join her cause and heartily abuse their present entertainer.

“Have any of you seen Miss Arden?” the good lady of the house inquires—“I sent her a note several days since, to request the honour of her company this evening to meet *you*; but she has not condescended to reply to it. I *very* particularly stated *who* were to be here, as I really did think *that* would be an inducement. I could not flatter myself that *I* could entertain a lady so vastly clever and accomplished as she is; but it seems none of the society of this place is to her taste. I have often thought it must be rather a misfortune to be so very clever as some people are, they never enjoy themselves in a plain way with those whom they think so far beneath them. I am sure we are extremely unfortunate in this respect, not to be able, so many of us as there are, to afford Miss Arden amusement for a few hours, but

we cannot help it, we were not all born clever." •

Mrs. Lovenoy, the curate's wife, replies—
"Some people may think her so vastly clever, and all that sort of thing, and I am sure she thinks herself so; but really, though I like to do all people justice, I cannot see anything so very wonderful in her."

Mrs. Snarl—"Nor I indeed, she *may* be clever, but she does not always show it, I am sure: what clever woman would think of wearing that dowdy-looking bonnet, I wonder? She is called very handsome too, but that I never *could* find out. What do you think, Mrs. Assington?"

Mrs. Assington—"Oh, dear! you must not ask me, I'm sure; the gentlemen, you know, think her exceedingly handsome, and there is no doubt she agrees with them perfectly, indeed I have heard her insinuate as much; but I am no judge of beauty, I suppose, for I confess I do not see with their eyes—it's my want of taste, I dare say."

"If she is so very handsome in the gentle-

men's eyes, it is a wonder she has not got a husband before this time," Miss Rosebelle remarks. "She is not *very* young, I believe, is she?"

Mrs. Snarl—"No, that she is not, *I'll* be sworn. For my part, I thought when I last saw her, she looked *any* thing but young."

Mrs. Assington—"Oh! no man can be worthy of her, so clever and such a genius as she is."

"Well, I don't think her clever, whatever other people may do," says the bishop's lady.

Mrs. Lovenoy—"Nor I, as I said before."

Mrs. Snarl—"Nor I."

Mrs. Bays—"I see nothing in her, I'm sure. There are many people more clever than she is, only they are not talked so much about." As the lady concludes her sentence, she looks very flatteringly on her silent daughter, the sad poetess.

Mr. Midgham—"Perhaps she has been crossed in love, and has now made up her mind never to depart from single blessedness."

Mr. Midgham's betrothed, with an approving

smile on her admirer, answers—"Very likely, I should think she must have had some misfortune of that sort, only she is too proud to acknowledge it."

Miss Rosebelle — "Oh dear! I should think she is too hard to please, ever to get a husband."

Mrs. Shuter — "Miss Arden's mind is too masculine to be long admired by any man, however he might be taken with her at first, unless he were a downright fool.

Miss Shuter — "So I should think, mamma; for you know (she continues slyly) gentlemen are fond of softness and gentleness in women. Are they not, Mr. Assington? Come, give us your opinion."

Mr. Assington replies—"Very fond of it indeed; and there is no fear of their being otherwise—they will never get enough to surfeit them."

Mrs. Assington bites her lips, and looks.

The curate's wife interposes—"For my part, I think her understanding is of that masculine character that it quite spoils what little beauty she has; and she forms such an extraordi-

nary idea of what men should be, that if ever she *should* get married, she will be much disappointed."

"Most ladies are," exclaims Miss Thryvewell ;
"Don't you think so, Mrs. Assington?"

Mrs. Assington — "Very few of us are appreciated by the other sex as we deserve ; our lot is a very unhappy one. Men are not contented with perfection — they look beyond it."

Mr. Assington — "I never knew a man that could see so far ; and till that man is shown to me, I doubt whether any of us can look beyond perfection."

"None so blind as those who will not see," says the lady ; "but it's quite useless to talk to you, James ; you are a brute, and nothing else."

The curate's lady, whose love for the absent fair one is not very remarkable, now happily prevents the continuance of this connubial *carte* and *tierce*, by observing that — "Books have so refined Miss Arden's ideas, that she is not fit for a world of realities, and therefore there

might be some excuse for her not mixing with society like other people."

Mrs. Mard thinks—"Miss Arden is only a heap of affectation, and she tries to be thought something more than other people, while in fact she is less than most."

The hostess, who has recovered her lost gentleness, now winds up all by observing, "that any man must be very stupid indeed to be caught by such a woman; but if ever Miss A. does get married (which she does not expect will be the case, for her part), but if ever such a thing *should* take place, why all she had to say was, Heaven help the man who had her!"

In this pious wish every lady devoutly joins, and after many shrugs, sneers, exclamations, and titterings, the subject is dismissed.

"Well!" exclaims the old lady from the abbey, "if there is anything in the saying that people's faces burn when they are talked about, Miss Arden's cheeks must be hot enough now."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shout the husband of the last

speaker, and her jovial son the fox-hunter. The old gentleman says — “Poor girl! she had better have faced us all, for then nobody would have dared to *say* a word against her, whatever might have been *thought*.”

“Oh! dear me,” cries the lady of the house quickly — “I did not mean to say anything *against* Miss Arden, I am sure.”

“Nor I.” “Nor I.” “Nor I,”—exclaim all and several — “We did not say a word against her.”

“There wasn’t much said *for* her,” retorts the old gentleman drily. The ladies look at each other rather disconcerted, all are silent.

The “awkward pause” is timely ended by the old gentlewoman, Mrs. Thryvewell, who asks the hostess if she has been to see the exhibition of some mountebanks who have lately taken up their temporary quarters in our neighbourhood. The hostess replies she has not, and the old lady remarks —

“Oh! dear, Mrs. Assington, you must go, you must indeed; really ’tis very clever. There was a man there dancing on a tight rope; I

never saw such a man, how he did jump to be sure, and came down again on the rope just like nothing ! He seemed as much at home as if he had been on our great barn floor a-dancing. I fairly trembled ; I thought he must fall and break his neck — however he could do it, I can't think. I said to my daughter, said I, '*I couldn't do that if you'd give me all the world !*' "

This asseveration coming with infinite simplicity from an old lady of some seventeen or eighteen stone, honest weight, excites the risibility of every one, and restores good humour. Mr. Thryvewell and the fox-hunter laugh heartily, and long, and the former as soon as he recovers his breath, says to his surprised wife—" Well, old lady, you won't mend that."

" You may laugh as you like, Mr. Thryvewell, and so may anybody else, but I say again I couldn't dance on that rope as he did."

" We're all sure of that mother," cries her jovial son, ready to burst himself with laughter.

" Well, then, what is there to laugh at ? I'm sure I cannot think what ails ye all."

Doctor Slaimour, whose spirits are much enlivened by his meal, though his habitual prudence is far from shaken, now quietly takes out his pill-box, observing — “You’ll excuse me, but I like to rub off as I go on.” He adroitly flings his dose into his mouth, and washes it down with his wine. “Have you brought your box, Mr. Mard?” he enquires of the bishop. “A stitch in time, you know, saves nine — nothing like taking care.” Unluckily the bishop has forgotten to bring his box, and the old doctor’s eyes twinkle faster than ever in the anticipation of a morning call on the negligent dignitary.

“Come, ladies,” the doctor continues, with a very fussy air, and an expression of gallantry on his sharp features, and pleasure in his twittering eyes — “Come, ladies, we can have a little more music, I hope; not late yet, you know — plenty of time for a little more harmony; can’t we finish our glee?”

Mr. Lovenoy, the curate, is on his feet in a moment, and eagerly seconds the doctor’s motion; but the ladies can’t, or won’t, which is all

the same, and excuse themselves. They have supped too considerably, if they tell the truth, but they will not do that, and they assert — “It is late, very late indeed — past one — we must go, indeed we must.” But the doctor is now “regularly up,” as the fox-hunter has it, and something in the shape of singing he will have. He turns now to one who is the refuge for the destitute on such occasions, the un-failing, untiring, and untirable hostess.

“Come, Mrs. Assington, what say you?— can’t we have one glee? you’ll take a part, perhaps—will you? Let’s finish ‘Drink to me only with thine eyes,’ eh?—you will, won’t you?”

The comical expression of the doctor’s face, and the ludicrous cast in his eyes, set the lady laughing, and she consents. The doctor, in raptures, cries, “Come along, ladies! come along, Mr. Lovenoy! come along, Assington! let’s be merry while we may—come along all!”

Off go the doctor, the curate, the hostess, and some of the ladies; but the gentlemen won’t budge an inch, and the fox-hunter lays

his huge hand upon the host, and prevents him from leaving his seat. They remain to enjoy their wine, from which they adjourn, about half-past two o'clock, to brandy-and-water and cigars. The captain is now "well up," (we quote the fox-hunter again,) and the latter calls upon him to relate his marvellous adventure with the seven Frenchmen; and the captain, who delights in being the hero of the company, the wonder of the hour, is in no wise reluctant to comply. The fox-hunter, it is easy to perceive, promises himself some amusement from the tale, oft told though it be; and there are several persons present this evening who have never heard the tale itself, though they may have probably heard of it. Their curiosity is much excited. It is suggested by the little doctor that the ladies had better be sent for from the music-room, so that none of the company may lose the opportunity of hearing this wonderful relation; and, the suggestion being adopted, a message is accordingly despatched by Mr. Midgham, and the ladies crowd in to hear the recital. Seats being

taken and silence obtained, the captain clears his rough voice, lays down his cigar, empties his glass of brandy-and-water, wipes his mouth and returns his handkerchief to the breast-pocket of his blue surtout, and with the air of a Hector begins his tale.

Having before given a fair outline of this ingenious invention of the bold captain, it will be superfluous to notice it here further than to state, that he this night eclipsed all his former doings. The captain had drunk himself up to the proper pitch, and when he arrives at that point he usually stands well with himself, and desires to do so with others; therefore, at so numerous a party, it was but natural that the host destroyed and taken by the naval hero should be represented as larger than on previous occasions when his auditors had been comparatively few. This time the captain has killed nine Frenchmen, and, as usual, he winds up with a very just complaint against all Tory governments, under which no merit can ever get rewarded, because interest alone is attended to. Now, we are all Radicals here, as has

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been before said, and we sympathise with our man of war, and abuse every Tory in the kingdom. The captain is quite elate, and so far all is well. The young ladies stare at him, for young ladies like brave men, and the captain has just shown that he is the bravest of the brave.

That mischievous Irishman, however, has something lurking in his eye. The fair hostess, too, hath no great affection for the captain, and it is plain, from her questions and more unquestionable looks, that she does not believe a word of what the hero has stated. The captain appeals to the lieutenant, who, be it recollected, was never out of the channel in his life. "Tickle me, Toby, and I'll tickle you." The lieutenant swears every word of the captain's tale is as true as the gospel. The captain does the same for him often. That tall emeraldêr means something—what can it be? Ten to one he means to have at the captain in some way or another. It is clear he has his own thoughts on the subject. Now he takes a pull at the brandy-and-water, and looks knowingly

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at the hostess. He has been at sea himself, and "done the state some service," consequently the hostess naturally asks his opinion. He very gravely replies that there can be but one opinion as to the accuracy of the story told by the captain, who, it is clear, is not used according to his deserts, and begs to be allowed to relate a little adventure of his own, which may further illustrate the truth of the captain's assertion, that merit seldom gets rewarded.

All express their willingness to hear the story, and the midshipman proceeds with "The Reefer's* Tale," which we will give by itself.

* Reefer, a name by which midshipmen are often familiarly called at sea.

THE REEFER'S TALE.

"Ferdinand Mendez Pinto was but a type of thee, thou liar of the first magnitude!"

"I wonder if the lion be to speak?"

"No wonder, my lord; one lion may, when many asses do."

IN the year eighteen hundred and something, I forget what, I happened to belong to a frigate which was ordered on the Madras station, and it was while performing the duties of that service that the little adventure which I am now about to relate for your especial amusement and edification occurred to me. Regarding its merits, I shall say nothing on so delicate a subject, for, being the hero of my own story, it would ill become a man of my modest deportment and retiring habits to enlarge upon

anything in which I chanced to participate. As to the authenticity of the tale, I can only say that it happened to myself, and that it is, as of course you all know, related by myself, and Mr. Spread is not the man to see things with magnifying eyes, nor to speak of them afterwards with exaggeration. Indeed, I have no doubt you will perceive that, in the course of my narrative, I shall touch lightly on some parts which may sound a little egotistical, or, peradventure, a little remarkable; but all that may be deemed in any way romantic will carefully be avoided. It is my maxim never to detail aught but plain, simple facts as they really occurred, and to myself too, for I never give anything upon hearsay.

It was during our stay in the Madras roads that I obtained leave of absence for a considerable time, and while on shore with some friends of mine, all good, steady, respectable men, like myself, I was introduced to some officers at the government-house, by whose influence I was speedily made acquainted with the governor. By this distinguished personage, who was a

man of great discernment, I was much noticed. He took pains to ascertain my peculiar qualifications, and, as I had frequently expressed my warm desire to serve him, he wisely availed himself of my offer on an emergency which seemed to be of so imminent a nature, that the welfare and interest of all British subjects in India, and, indeed, the retention of our colonies there, was likely to be endangered thereby.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, it is not, as I have said before, my intention to be egotistical; I will therefore briefly state, what I have no doubt your penetration has long since discovered, that if there are any remarkable qualities about me, they are presence of mind in danger, great bodily strength, unshaken nerve, and a clearness of intellect which enables me to perceive every chance in my favour, and a promptitude of action by which I can at once seize it for my advantage. I need not say more on this subject, particularly as I know you are persons of too keen perceptions to have known me so long without seeing much more in myself than my natural reserve and bashfulness will

allow me to hint at. But the governor, having made himself fully acquainted with my character, resolved to profit by my friendship for him; and thrice happy was I to have it in my power to serve him, for he was a generous, noble-minded fellow, and a man of honour and veracity, such as I could call my friend with a mixed feeling of pride and pleasure; for I never associate with those men who are in the habit of departing from truth and honour.

It was thus he was situated when he applied to me for my assistance. A rajah, whose territory lay about a hundred leagues distant from the province of Madras, and who was the most cruel, tyrannous, and blood-thirsty savage in nature, had declared war against the British, and had threatened death to all the natives who should be found aiding or assisting, or holding communication with the British government. He also had promised that the towns and cities that were in the possession of the English should be given up to his troops to plunder and spoliage as they pleased; that all the property found belonging to the Eng-

lish, or to such of the natives as might be friendly disposed towards them, should be given up to his soldiers, and that the persons of the owners should be made slaves of for their profit. The same advantages were offered to all the soldiers, native and English, who would desert from their flag to enter the rajah's service, and the best means were taken for effectually making these circumstances known to all persons, both in the province of Madras and in every other part of India.

Having made such munificent promises of reward, it will easily be conceived that the rajah soon had a numerous army. So great were the numbers of all classes, and from all parts, that daily flocked to his standard, that for nine or ten months, I am not quite certain which, he was obliged to keep thirty-one thousand tailors constantly employed in making uniforms, notwithstanding his stores contained sufficient suits to clothe nineteen hundred and two thousand men when he first resolved upon the war. In due course of time the rajah's army was complete, and he prepared to march

upon the British, whose total extermination he was resolved upon, and which he intended to effect in a mode very different from any which was ever known either in ancient or modern warfare, and as it was quite a new device, I will just describe it to you.

You have doubtless heard or read of the manner in which it was formerly customary for the Highlanders to hunt their deer among their bold mountains and deep glens in that picturesque country which they inhabited. Vast numbers of them assembled and scattered themselves widely about the country, as nearly in the form of a circle as they could guess ; and they took care to drive all the deer they could find towards that point which might be supposed the centre of the circle. Thus they gradually closed upon the unsuspecting animals, until a firm and regular phalanx was formed all around them, and the poor victims, not being able to force a passage, were all massacred in the general slaughter. This, by the way, is a method also known to some of the Indians, for it is astonishing to perceive how very much

the habits of different races of men who have lived in a state of nature or semi-barbarism assimilate to each other, although they are so widely separated that all intercourse with them must be impossible.

But, to leave this short digression, I will just relate another object which the rajah had in view when he adopted this mode of making war. The whole of his territory, which was very large, was much infested by lions, and these terrible animals had lately so much increased, that they had swallowed up whole villages, or what is the same thing, all the people who lived in them, and the entire country seemed likely to be depopulated by these horrible scourges to mankind. Now, although the rajah was a cruel monster who would often, for a day's sport, hang, shoot, choke, or drown fifty or sixty of his subjects, just as I would spit larks or shoot snipes, he did not choose that they should be driven from the land or eaten by lions. He had many reasons doubtless for this dislike to the mal-practice of the wild beasts, but the chief of them were, that it

so much interfered with his private amusements, and that it appeared to him likely to be more pleasant for a man of his notions and habits to be the rajah of a well-populated country than one which was uninhabited. The country in itself would pay no taxes, and if it did, it would be inconvenient for him to collect his own revenue, and, from the insatiable appetite of the lions, it seemed very probable that he would soon be left *solus* in his kingdom.

Neither was it quite clear to him that he should escape, for, notwithstanding that lions are the kings of the beasts, there is no proof of their having ever shown any particular respect for the crowned heads of men. It is a well established fact, that they have as yet never become members of the Holy Alliance. Indeed, if we go back to former days, there is reason to believe that lions are somewhat democratic in their partialities. One of Nero's condemned slaves found favour in the eyes of a lion, merely for taking a thorn out of his foot, whereas an emperor would perhaps have put his foot upon the slave's neck for his pains. It

is clear, therefore, that in their predilections, lions take the popular side, and it may be inferred therefrom, they are radical in principle. There can be no doubt, from the circumstance just related, that they entertain strong opinions upon the slave question, and it is not unfair to imagine that they advocate equality, and the levelling system, so that upon the whole, the rajah did not deem it prudent to rely upon any regal notions which might run in lions' heads, so far as to place his head in the way of the lions' mouths.

Well, his plan was a bold one, it must be confessed. What think you he proposed? Nothing less than to hunt and exterminate the lions and the British at the same time. And his idea was as ingenious as bold, and as correct as ingenious. In one of his proclamations he said, "It will be less labour for us to effect the destruction of both at once than to attempt it singly." This document went on —

"For whereas, it hath been made known to us in our court, by persons duly qualified to

ascertain the same, that every man who is a real Briton, will fight to all intents and purposes like a lion; and whereas it is, and has long been known to us and our council, that India is overrun both by Britons and lions, it appeareth to us and our council that we cannot do better than to hunt the lions and the Britons into one ring, where they will destroy each other for the sake of proving which are best entitled to the distinction of being called lion-hearted."

Notwithstanding the profound secrecy adopted by the rajah in all his military preparations, the suspicions of my keen-sighted friend the governor were awakened, and he determined to raise an army of observation, which he intended to station on the frontier of the province to check any advances of the rajah. It was necessary, however, for him to call upon another rajah who was reigning in a very distant part of India, and who had always, either from fear or love, shown a friendly disposition to the British Government, and who was therefore graciously permitted to reign over his own

possessions undisturbed, upon payment of a subsidy, which left his office as near as could be an honorary one.

As the government had so far extended their liberal support to this rajah, it was but fair for them to exact in return his assistance, whenever they got into any broils or disturbances. On this occasion, as on every other, he was in the most friendly manner possible requested to send a body of troops to aid the governor my friend, in his attempt to quell the insolent invasion of the other rajah ; and as he was to have the distinguished honour of fighting on the side of the British, and in a quarrel which was solely theirs, he having nothing to do with it, the government with the same friendly freedom hinted to him that he must pay and provision his own men—to all which there was no doubt entertained that he would cheerfully consent.

The despatches were prepared and sealed, and then arose a difficulty. The route to the kingdom of the friendly rajah lay through part of the dominions of the rajah who was

unfriendly, and the chances were much against their safe delivery. On the one hand there was the army of the rajah to be feared, who would in all human probability intercept the bearer, and on the other hand, if he escaped that, there were the lions to be apprehended, who, if they did not "read, mark, and learn" the dispatches, would doubtless, "inwardly digest" them, bearer and all. Under these circumstances, who would carry them? and, if any body should in his temerity volunteer in such a cause, was he to be relied on? In the council, where this point was solemnly discussed, there was much doubt and misgiving, and nothing definitive could be arrived at. In the midst of this perplexity the governor bethought himself of me, and he requested that the debate should be adjourned for two hours while he sought me, which was readily agreed to.

I was sitting quite alone one very hot day, when the thermometer stood somewhere about 130°, in the deepest shade I could get into. I was pretty well broiled, you may be sure; and I

was just cooling myself with a cigar and some delicious cold brandy and water, if that water could be termed cold which would scald the hair off a porker, when my friend the governor entered. It was evident that he was as warm as myself, and I verily believe that my spinal marrow was absolutely melted into thin oil, and running up and down my back whenever I changed my position from the horizontal to the perpendicular, and *vice versa*, like quicksilver in a glass tube. Indeed, people who have never resided in tropical climates have but very faint notions of the heat of them. Although well inured to the temperature, I am ready to faint when I think of it. I may attribute the baldness which is now observable on my cranium to the heat of that very morning. I will tell you how it was.

I had imprudently gone out for a few minutes without my hat. The reason was this. The fierce rays of the sun had set fire to the head of a white bull, and had already burnt its horns to the quick, which was occasioning the

animal the greatest agony, when I first heard its bellowings, and as I could not bear to see the creature thus suffering, I took a pitcher of water and threw over it. I did it with the best intention in the world, but good intentions often produce mischief, and so it was in this instance. The water was so hot that it scalded the poor animal's eyes out, and raised blisters all over its head and neck, and made the bull more furious than ever. It ran away, and I never saw it after. But the effort to put an end to its pain cost me dear. When I returned into my chamber I found my head burning, and put up my hand to it, when my hair crumbled all off beneath my touch, and fell to the ground like fried parsley. I was perfectly scalped, and of course suffering intense pain. The slave who came in was astonished, and he ran out, crying that the top of my head was burning like a volcano. Presently in came the whole of the domestics, and one of them having more presence of mind than the rest, perhaps because he had seen such

things before, ran to the kitchen and cut a large steak from a raw round of beef, and laid it on the top of my head.

Oh! how delightfully soothing was the sensation I experienced when the raw steak was first applied. I never felt anything like it before nor since. It was past description. And how it hissed, just as if it had been in a frying-pan over a huge coal fire! Presently it ceased to have the effect, and I called to the man who brought it to turn it. He did so, and the side which was first next my head was fried as brown as it could be, without being black, which it soon would have been. The application was renewed several times, and it was not until they had fried above twenty pounds of beef-steaks on my bare head that I was easy. Afterwards I had a hole cut into a round of beef, into which I put my head, and wore it like a turban; and thus I was seated smoking, as I said before, when my friend the governor came in.

He was too much absorbed in the momentous affair to which I have alluded, to notice

my head-dress ; and probably he might have mistaken it for a red cachmere, placed on like a turban after the eastern fashion. However that might have been, he rapidly opened the question to me. After reciting the preliminaries, which you have already heard, he looked at me with an air of deep concern, and with an imploring glance, as if he felt that on me rested all the hopes he had dared to form at such an awful crisis. " You, Mr. Spread," said he, " are a man of enterprise and of well-tryed courage, and it is on you that I alone depend for aid in this emergency. There is nothing which man may or can dare, which you have not done and can do. If you are my friend on this occasion, you will preserve me from defeat and death, and prolong the happiness of myself and family. You will moreover save the British possessions in India, and extend the immortal fame of our country, and your reward will be great and certain. If you do not undertake the delivery of these despatches, I give myself up for lost, and my family must perish with me, besides thousands of——"

"Say no more, my dear friend," cried I, for I was much affected by his earnestness. "I will go, and instantly." He put his arms round my neck, but could not speak his thanks. His grateful feelings were too powerful for utterance, but his looks spoke far more than words ever could express, and his heart throbbed so violently that it shook the whole house. Part of the raw beef came in contact with his fine manly forehead, and terribly besmeared it, but he observed it not, he was too deeply immersed in the amiable feelings of his heart.

I will pass over my long and arduous journey to the court of the rajah. It will be enough to say that I surmounted every obstacle, natural and artificial, and that I delivered my papers, and received assurances of prompt and efficient aid; after which, as I too well knew the high anxiety of my friend the governor for my success, I returned as quickly as possible to shorten his suspense.

I had experienced enough of adventure and hazard on my journey, and so far was it advantageous to me that I had acquired a prac-

tical knowledge of the best means of conquering difficulties; but I must admit that the recurrence of danger and unheard-of exertions was so frequent that I became tired of them. But the most striking of my adventures was yet to come. Hitherto it was my presence of mind and energy of resource which had been called into action, and by these, together with super-human labours and fatigues, I had avoided coming into personal contact with wild beasts. It was true I had been obliged to kill from twenty to thirty of the enemy's soldiers to avoid being taken, but that was nothing. Now, however, I was destined to fall in with enemies of another description. You shall hear how it was, and what I did.

It was towards the close of a day which had been more than usually hot and fatiguing, and when my labours had been of a most harassing description, for I had been obliged to wind my way over a tall mountain, stretching itself upwards as if the earth were desirous of aspiring to the heavens, and covered with trees and brushwood so thick and full of thorns that,

but for my great personal strength and mental energy, combined with a thorough contempt of pain, I never could have got through my toils. But I was incapable of yielding while I knew my friend's danger, and onwards I went, the blood streaming from my lacerated limbs and feet till I reached the skirts of the mountain-forest.

Tired and worn out as I was, I could not help pausing to admire the rich and vast expanse of scenery which so suddenly appeared before me as I emerged from the deep gloom of the wood. For many leagues there were numerous and extensive plantations, all parts teeming with verdant luxuriance, and beautifully interspersed with gentle undulating hills amply clothed with the loveliest vegetation, and with sweetly meandering rivers and streams, which curled along their serpentine courses, having their surfaces richly gilded by the setting sun, forming as many types of the beauty of the serpent without its venom. Multitudes of dwellings of a lowlier kind were also thickly scattered; and these, although they evinced

the penury and humble condition of the inhabitants, showed as clearly that they were the abodes of a contented and peaceful people, by the lively boundings and mirth which I could see they were displaying, and told plainly enough that happiness does not solely consist in luxury.

I will just remark, by the way, that my eyesight was then extremely good, and I was thus enabled to discern this, although separated from it by a wide river several miles across, which ran along the base of the mountain. Indeed the Indians used to call me the "Long-eye," and with some justice too, I am obliged to own.

The spot where I stood in silent contemplation of the many beauties before me was pleasantly shaded by numerous graceful palm-trees, arecas, and banyans; and as I found myself too tired to attempt crossing the wide river that night, I resolved to seek the shelter of some umbrageous spot, where I might obtain a few hours' repose, and partake of the frugal contents of my knapsack. It was necessary that

I should use the greatest caution, for I was then in the dominions of the rajah, who contemplated the entire destruction of the British ; I therefore selected the deep shelter of a fine burgot, or banyan tree, whose overhanging branches, springing out horizontally from the main trunk, and having on each minor branches, which had inclined at right angles downwards till they reached the ground, had then taken root as is the custom of these trees, and thus formed a capacious tent, where I might sleep in security from the observation of man.

I quickly made my evening meal, which I enjoyed with peculiar satisfaction, and soon endeavoured to sleep. I had not long been stretched out at full-length, with my head resting on my knapsack, when I heard a very faint quivering motion of the earth at intervals, which, to a more unpractised ear than mine, might have seemed like the vibration produced by the distant tread of a body of cavalry. However, by cautiously listening for a few seconds, I became convinced that it could not be the tread of horses, for the interval be-

tween the sounds was considerably longer than that which elapses between the steps of the latter animal at a gallop. I could now hear the noise plainer and plainer, and I found it approaching in the direction I had taken through the wood. Soon I became convinced that the sounds must proceed from the feet of lions, or perchance of tigers, both of which always bound, in hunting, in sudden springs, like a cat. Perhaps, thought I, they are in pursuit of some animal, and should they happen to come this way, may, in the ardour of the chase, pass on without noticing me. I therefore kept quiet. At this time I imagined they were about a mile from me on the opposite side of the mountain, so that the noise I heard from the boundings came directly through the hill to my ears. Soon, however, I could discover that they had reached the summit, for I now heard their deep-drawn breathings, like thousands of fox-hounds snuffing in the scent.

A sudden thought, amounting almost to conviction, flashed across my mind with the rapidity of lightning. I have before said, that

the long and sharp thorns had lacerated my feet and limbs, and that I had left a track of my own blood all through the mountain-forest. It was clear to me now that some lions, who perhaps had just commenced their maraudings for the night, had fallen across my trail, and that they were pursuing it through, or rather over, the brushwood, which obliged them to take higher leaps than ordinary. If they had been hunting by sight, they would not have had occasion to keep up the loud and deep snuffling which so powerfully struck upon my ears. No, it was manifest they were hunting by scent, and that the fresh odour of human blood gave them additional vigour and ferocity.

Under these circumstances it would have been highly impolitic to have remained in the shade of the banyan-tree, as they would be brought full upon me, and I should have little chance of contending successfully in a confined space with such furious antagonists. Besides, I did not know how many there might be of them, and it was very necessary to go forth and reconnoitre. Accordingly I took up my sabre

and pistols, and went out, without fear certainly—I was never more composed in my life; but, taking into consideration the exigency of the occasion, I judged it prudent to discard all rashness and temerity, and to observe the strictest caution.

I ascended the side of the hill till I arrived at the summit, and, peeping carefully over, observed six lions. They were at fault. A quantity of water having lodged in one of the hollows on the mountain through which I had passed, they had lost the scent. While they were eagerly running about, lashing their huge sides with their tails, in quest of the trail, their horrible jaws widely extended, their eyes glaring fire, and their whole frames foaming with rage, I took my precautions. My measures were soon completed, for, as I have hinted, I am quick and decisive in moments like this. To attack six lions at once would not have been wise, seeing that there could be no pledge of fair-play on either side, from want of a knowledge of the means of communication, and, on the other hand, they might not have

observed it if such pledge had been given. "It is ill-talking between a fu' man and a fasting," says the Scottish proverb, and I have a shrewd guess that it is worse between a full man and a fasting lion.

I then took my stand about six feet from the edge of the mountain, on a spot where there was a large opening between the trees. Close to my body was a high range of brushwood, which stretched along very thickly interwoven, much in the form of a bank, and reaching till within about two yards of the brow. Here I could wait their approach with a good chance of success, for approach I knew they would, and I resolved to astonish them. Presently one of the monsters, that appeared to be a beast of some authority, and more sagacity than his companions, trotted round the piece of water, and I could see him fall directly upon my trail, and quickly he dipped his great disgusting tongue into my blood, which still remained undried on the ground. Giving a furious, short, quick roar, not very much unlike the hoarse bark of a

mastiff, but a thousand times more terrible, he set off at a trot, keeping his nose close to the ground, and snuffing in the delicious scent with infinite *goût*.

Now then, thought I, for the tug of war — and I was right. The scent becoming more and more strong, till it was breast high, the old hoary savage raised his head, and stared me full in the face. He was followed by three others, one considerably more in advance than the other two. Presently the two foremost got on a line, and, after several tremendous springs, they both came directly at me. Right towards me they came, sure enough, with a bound that would have sent me flying over the precipice, had I not kept my ground firmly. They were destined to receive a surprise. They no sooner, however, came within a yard of me, than I threw myself on the ground, and over me they went, finding, when it was too late, the vast mistake they had made. As I had fallen with my head close to the edge of the precipice, I could see them look very much disconcerted as

they went down, down, down, to the last spot of earth, and then roll into the comfortable bath of the river. I have a notion they were both pretty well winded by the time they got into it, but I did not stop to triumph over their defeat ; I merely nodded to them with some significance, and advised them, when next they went hunting, to look before they leaped.

My attention was now urgently called to their friends, who were fast coming towards me, with an evident intention of honouring me with their notice. One of the next two made a leap at me like his predecessors, but as he seemed likely to fall much shorter than those who had gone before, and might have climbed up again to my especial annoyance, I took the liberty of shooting him flying. An awkward shot it was, for it was directly over my head, but I struck him well, and down he came plump, with much the same noise as that emitted by an Irish pavior when he is ramming down the stones in his Majesty's highways. I served the next precisely in the same way, ex-

cepting that he was not killed, and as he fell only a few yards from me in a clump of trees, he quickly reascended, and I was compelled to push my sabre down his throat in a very unceremonious manner, for which he repaid me by biting off the blade close to the hilt, leaving the latter in my hand. The force of my thrust had sent him downwards, and he troubled me no more.

I was, however, in an awkward dilemma. I had now no weapons but those with which nature had endowed me, and there were two more lions to be settled, or, what was more disagreeable, there might be two lions to settle me. They had stopped at several places to amuse themselves by tasting my blood where it had fallen on the ground in the greatest plenty, merely, as I presume, to give their appetites a whet for the more substantial meal they promised themselves on my carcase. They now came forward at a somewhat more deliberate pace than their companions had employed, and with looks which bespoke a confident expectation as to the result. "Blessed are they who

expect nothing." Even lions may be too sanguine, as the sequel proved, for I was not destined to find a tomb in their stomachs. Now, thought I to myself, I must adopt another mode of proceeding in this delicate business. So I descended some distance down the mountain, till I came to a nearly level spot of considerable size. Down came the lions after me. They seemed to have taken warning by the fate of their comrades, and evidently did not hold me so lightly in their estimation as they might have done before their friends had found out my qualities. I, on the other hand, exerted all my caution.

I, therefore, prudently determined to place my back against a solid piece of rock, growing out of the mountain, that one of the monsters should not get behind me while I might be engaged with the other. I judged rightly of their intention, for no sooner had they arrived in front of me, than, after eyeing my determined looks, as if with some timidity and doubt, they separated, one still remaining ready to spring upon me while the other walked

round as if to reconnoitre my position, and to make, as I judged, a real attack in my rear, while the other made a feint in front. I laughed to see how disappointed the latter looked when he found my position so incompatible with his purposes. Soon he trotted back to the other with his tail between his legs. Then they held a council of war, in which, as I guessed from their motions, it was resolved that both should attack at once in front.

They screwed their courage to the sticking-place, and prepared for action. First they erected their tails, and then lashed their sides with them, as if to put themselves in a passion, and to frighten me at the same time. But it would not do, I was not so easily alarmed. Then they bristled up their manes till every huge hair stood on end like so many spear-points, and rolled their eyes about furiously till they flashed like lightning. Still I was firm, and looked on them with cool defiance. Then they opened their ponderous jaws, down which I could see to their very throats, and each appeared large enough to allow my pas-

sage with as much ease as I could swallow a small pill. And then they sent forth a roar which shook the very mountain, and made the trees tremble like aspens. I did not mind that. So now, having expended all their horrors upon me to no purpose, they thought they might as well begin in earnest.

Retreating to the very edge of the level ground, they both advanced together at a tremendous rate till they reached within about twenty feet of me (it might be a little more or less, I will not be positive as it was only guess-work), and then they collected all their energies for the last spring, which, as they thought, was to settle my business. I had turned up the sleeves of my jacket and shirt, and stood bare-armed to receive them. Their last bound was exceedingly well taken, I must confess, for I will do even my enemies justice. In coming towards me, they described nearly the arc of a circle, the highest part of which was above my head, so that they could descend upon me open-mouthed. But I anticipated this intention by throwing out both my arms, as if about

to strike a blow, *à-la* Tom Crib, and thrust both hands into their mouths, and as they descended upon me with all their force, and great weight, my hands were driven right down their throats. There I had them safe.

Oh, if you had only heard their choking kind of cough, it would have astonished you, I protest. They tried to retreat as soon as they got their legs on the ground, but I thrust my fingers right through the œsophagus of each animal, and prevented that. Then they dragged me a little forward, and tore up the earth with their hind legs like mad. All this time they were coughing, spluttering, and hecketing just like ten thousand pigs with potatoes stuck in their throats. But I was still calm, and indeed I may say that I felt highly amused at their ludicrous surprise and horror, for their countenances were very expressive at the time, I assure you. At last they seemed as if losing strength, but I thought that might be a trick, just to induce me to slacken my hold, and I held the faster. I was right again, for when they found I would not let go, one of them,

who seemed the most cunning of the two, made a great leap right over my head as I was stooping towards them, and carried my arm right back along with him, of course, as far as it could go. The other did the same, and then my arms were both behind me for a moment, when the first jumped back again. "Oh! oh!" said I, "is this your game? Well well, my lads, jump away to the end of your tether, I'll hold on, I promise you." And jump they did, sure enough, first one behind and then the other, till my arms were kept alternately moving before and behind with great rapidity. You may have seen the old-fashioned weather-cocks which are formed of wood in the shape of a man, having in each hand a piece of flat board, which he holds at arm's length to catch the wind, and which, when it blows smartly, and the wind veers much, keep flying over his head and round again, first one and then the other, while the figure of the man turns about on a pivot. Just like that, I was kept in motion turning about between the two lions.

I must confess it made my arms ache violently, but I bore it all with good humour, as I knew they must eventually get the worst of it. "Go your lengths," said I, "you'll be easy presently, or Mr. Spread never told truth in his life." And they did go all the length they could. But I was right again. They soon grew weaker and weaker, and ten times as husky and asthmatic. "You'll faint, good people," said I to them, "but you shall have plenty of water. I'll send you right into the river, don't fear. And then I laughed, but they thought it no laughing matter. They were going, going, going, as the auctioneers say, and at last they gave a long and deep groan, and then gave up the ghost.

I can't say that I was sorry it was over, for, however trifling such a matter may seem to those who were never engaged in a similar encounter, I can tell you it is no joke to have both arms in the throats of two lions. When I took my hands out of their mouths, my fingers were so cramped from long continuance in one position, and from being so tightly com-

pressed, I could scarcely move one of them. But I was triumphant, and perfectly safe, and I failed not to return thanks to Providence accordingly.

When this was done, I bundled one carcase into the river, and was about to do the same for the other; but I fortunately recollected that in his gullet my fingers had come into contact with a substance which did not appear like flesh or bone, so I took the liberty of opening the old villain with my penknife—and what do you think I found? Guess for a year, and you wouldn't be right. But, not to keep you in suspense, I'll tell you.

It seemed that the rajah, who intended to exterminate the British, had sent one of his most trustworthy couriers to his general-in-chief, with orders to him to move his army on a certain day to a certain spot named in the despatches. These papers were placed, for the convenience of carriage and to prevent them from being injured, in an iron case of cylindrical form, and about the size of a candle-box. This case had been suspended from the shoulders of

the courier by a strap and buckles, and the poor fellow having fallen in with the lions, was devoured piecemeal, as I suppose, and the iron case fell to the share of the lion I had killed. Or, what is just as likely, perhaps this lion had got the courier all to himself, and swallowed him whole, case and all, and that the latter took a much longer time in digesting than the body required. But, as I have no positive grounds for asserting that it was either one way or the other, I shall leave it to you, ladies and gentlemen, to decide which was most probable, as I never speak confidently but when I detail what I know to be facts.

However it was, the result was fortunate. The despatches contained the whole plan of the intended operations, and I took them with me to my friend, the governor, who was thus enabled to defeat the plan of his opponent, by marching an immense army to the spot where the rajah's troops were to assemble, and placing them in ambuscade till the enemy came up. Then he surrounded them, and had them in precisely the same situation as they intended

to get him into, if possible. But my friend was more lenient and merciful than his cruel adversary would have been had he been successful. He merely obliged all his troops to surrender their arms and baggage, and compelled the rajah to acknowledge the government of the British, and to pay an annual subsidy to a great amount. None of the troops were put to death, but all terminated happily, and without bloodshed.

Thus, ladies and gentlemen, I had, as you see, and as my friend, the governor, reported in his despatches to England, the distinguished honour of preserving the possession of our Indian colonies, of producing a large annual sum to our treasury, and of saving hundreds of thousands of valuable lives. What ought to have been the result of this important service to myself, I leave every candid man to say; but it is lamentable to see how interest oversteps merit in these days—I have never been rewarded, nor even noticed, although, like our friend the captain, I have done so much. And here I am, plain Mr. Spread,

midshipman in his Majesty's service, with the prospect of being turned adrift, when I am no longer required, on a "midshipman's half-pay," which, as everybody knows, is "*nothing a-year*, and the privilege of drawing it quarterly or otherwise."

Like the brave captain, I am the victim of Tory governments and their insatiable desire to preserve all the good things of this life for their friends. If *merit* could promote a man, I have enough; but *interest* is all in these days. Nothing is to be done without it. Extermination to the Tories!

THE DEPARTURE.

“ To all and each a fair good night.”

“ You are gentlemen of brave metal ! you would lift the moon out of her sphere, if she would continue in it five weeks without changing ! ”

WHETHER the extraordinary tale told by the emeralder with so much well-affected modesty and gravity was his own invention or not, none of us can say. We seldom like to give people credit for anything, if we can help it, and in this case the most that the good folks of “ our town ” will do will be to admit that he told the story very well, and at a very proper time ; but, for the rest, they will one and all swear that he borrowed it from somebody or read it in somebody’s book. And perhaps he did—I cannot say, reader ; but I never heard or saw the story before.

The effects of the reefer’s tale are, however,

sadly distressing to the heroic captain. He has been accustomed to be looked up to as our hero; his opinion has been consulted on all matters of warfare that we by chance read of in the papers—he was our oracle as to the battle of Navarino, and a still more recent display of “British valour,” though not in a British cause. If an invasion had threatened this fair island, we should have gladly and contentedly placed ourselves at the disposal of the captain, who would have defended us in the last extremity, and from his gallant breast we should have imbibed by sympathy a large stock of courage. Had an enemy threatened our shores, the captain would have looked black and fierce, and we should have looked fierce and black too, when he was near us, at least. But now, reader, everybody is laughing at him, and, by the sneers and derision of the assembled party, it is evident that his marvellous relations are all regarded as apocryphal by the youngest Miss and the oldest lady in the room. The fox-hunter, who heartily enjoys the joke, exclaims, “Well, captain, what do you think of the nine Frenchmen now?” And, after the laughter occasioned by this query has subsided, the

fair hostess, who observes the captain's down-cast face, inquires, "What is the matter, Captain Hock? you do not look well."

The truth is, that the captain [does not feel very well, whatever his looks may be. He is in a "quandary," as the old lady, Mrs. Thryvewell, says, and what to do he does not know. He feels that he is suddenly and unexpectedly plunged into a dilemma. It came upon him like a clap of thunder on a fine day; for who could have thought that any creature in the shape of man would have dared to tell a tale that was meant to ridicule all his boastings and pretensions, while sitting opposite his huge carcase, and staring him full in his ferocious and black-whiskered face? The ladies are beginning to get concerned for the fate of the emeralder. They whisper that he is "very venturesome," and they hope "nothing bad will come of it." But there the reefer sits, alternately eyeing the captain, "as cool as a cucumber," and drinking his brandy-and-water as if he were safe from the clutches of his gigantic antagonist.

Still the captain is uncertain what to do. The emeralder has not as yet denied the possibility of his statements, but then what he had

done was all the same. Shall he bluster it out? he is bigger than the emeralder, but, on the other hand, the latter is not very little, and there is something very *noli me tangere* about him. Upon the whole, he thought he had better not be rash. Perhaps it was only a joke, after all, and there might be no intention to give him offence. The captain thought thus, for "the wish was father to the thought;" but he could not help fancying there was a something in the emeralder's manner not particularly agreeable; he certainly was not the pleasantest man in company he had ever met with, and "there was a laughing devil in his sneer" that very much puzzled him. However, everybody is laughing, and the captain will laugh too—he laughs louder and longer than anybody, drinks off his glass, shakes the emeralder by the hand, the host ditto, bids all good night, and departs with Lieutenant Snarl. As they reach the door, they are called back by the fox-hunter, who requests them to wait a few minutes for him, as he is going directly, and they stand in the "hall."

Now the captain is gone, every one gives it him. They all applaud the emeralder for his timely and quizzical story, and he receives

their commendations as if he knew the full value of them, and had a foresight of what they will say of him when he, like the captain, has turned his back upon them.

Now there is a general rise, and all are taking leave of their entertainers and each other. The little doctor, with a candle in one hand, is actively shaking hands with his guests with the other, as he smirkingly bows them out. They are all out but the reefer. As soon as the door is closed, they all begin simultaneously to pick their entertainment to pieces, and to abuse their host and hostess. "The most tiresome evening I ever spent in my life. Never will go any more. Such singing!—and what playing! Mrs. Assington needn't say she was self-taught; any one can tell that. Yes, indeed; so glad it's over. So am I. I wished to be gone hours ago. And what cookery! The melted butter was all oil. And they never scalded the onions for stuffing the geese—and the nasty little trout!"

Miss Shuter—"Really, papa, we must give up visiting such people."

"Decidedly, my love, they are horribly vulgar, and can't afford to give these things in any style, and to continue the acquaintance

might injure your prospects, my love. I have done with them."

Mr. Thryvewell — "The best of the whole of it was that story about the lions. How precious mad the captain looked. He'll never tell his old pack of nonsense any more, I guess."

"La, Mr. Thryvewell! do you think it could be all true about the lions?" asked Mrs. Thryvewell. "I didn't believe more than half of it!"

The fox-hunter, the captain, and the lieutenant, are standing together talking of the said story. The first is quizzing the second, and the third exclaims, "If *I* was in the captain's place, I'd pull his nose—see if I wouldn't. If he'd dare to make fun of anything I said, see how I'd serve him. I'd let him know."

Oh, you unhappy lieutenant! Look there, reader, look; up go his heels, and down he is sprawling on his back in the dirt. That mad devil of an Irishman has been standing by, listening to the threats of the boaster, and has "capsized" him, as he would call it, right in the mud. Poor fellow! why did you not take care that the emerald was out of hearing, and then you might have said what you pleased? Now see what a mess you are in! Your

white drills are all over mud, and who knows what besides.

The ladies scream, run, implore, beg, pray, scream again, and, as a last attempt, faint. They could not do less. Some are carried into the doctor's house to be restored. The doctor's lady runs out with a candle in each hand, and goes up to the emeralder, and asks with great earnestness, "What is the matter?" The emeralder, who is smoking his cigar, replies very coolly, "Nothing!"

"Oh! but I'm sure there is. Are *you* hurt?"

"Devil a bit."

"Oh! come in then."

"Wait a bit."

The blood is wiped from the lieutenant's nose; he takes the captain's arm, who says not a word, and the prostrated hero is led home to his wife, who has fortunately gone on before him. There he will, no doubt, find consolation. The ladies recover, and are sent home; the fox-hunter and his father laugh more than ever; the emeralder goes in with the little doctor and his wife; the doors are shut, and—good night, reader.

A SCENE.

" I tell you a wife is out of date now-a-days.

Time was—but that's all over ; a wife's a drug now.

Mere tar-water, with every virtue under Heaven,

But nobody takes it." *The Way to Keep Him.*

THE party to which we have called attention in the preceding pages, was productive of a scene which promised to interfere permanently with the happiness of the little doctor. We give it not as it has been generally described, for that would be impossible ; it has been described in so many ways, and by so many people, that it has at length arrived to a much more dreadful affair than it is, therefore we have filtered it from some of the additions and embellishments it hath received in its passage through so many mouths and ears, and tell the story as simply as we can.

The little doctor has a pretty servant, who, though dignified with the title of " Cook," is a body that makes herself " generally useful." She is in truth a very handy personage about

a house, to do her justice, and this is not the least of her qualities. She hath a talent for collecting the news of the neighbourhood; what is done in everybody's house, and what is not done; and this happy gift renders her very acceptable to her mistress, who takes an especial interest in other people's concerns. Indeed, it may be doubted whether the lady is not too liberal in this respect. Her own matters, one would think, might suffer from the love she bears to those of her friends; but herein she is free from any selfish preference for that which is her own. The persons who are thus honoured by her superintendence, are not as grateful as might be expected. They even abuse her interference, which they term prying curiosity, meddling officiousness, and a mean desire to watch her neighbour's movements; but notwithstanding they are so ungrateful, all their revilings and abuse cannot turn her from her laudable purpose. She still proceeds in the same course with an honourable firmness, and hence the talents of her domestic render her a ready coadjutor and an useful instrument.

The good lady, therefore, while she prizes

the maid, is necessarily exalting her to a degree of intimacy of which the girl has tact enough to take advantage. Besides being prized by the mistress for her useful qualities, she is, it would seem, valued by the master for her ornamental graces. She hath a roguish eye, a pretty face, and a well-turned ankle, to which the little doctor frequently calls the attention of his guests, in her presence too, and thus the minx is raised somewhat above herself, and she not unfrequently takes more liberties than are seemly.

The party, it will be remembered, broke up about four o'clock in the morning. The little doctor, as usual, had the spasms, and Lissy, the name given familiarly by the master and mistress to the servant, was particularly active. It is likely she had from experience anticipated such an event, for she had two kettles and a saucepan full of boiling water, and sundry pieces of flannel all ready for the occasion. The promptitude of the application tended much to relieve the complaint, and Lissy's forethought, Lissy's dexterity, her readiness, and other qualities, displayed at the critical time, all and sundry, met with the little man's

decided approbation. He was loud in her praise. In short he was relieved of the spasms, and he was grateful. He resolved to do a bit of the liberal. How to do it was the thing. He could not exactly make up his mind, but he would think of it. Luckily, as he at the moment fancied, an opportunity soon offered.

The next night the good doctor's spouse felt herself very sleepy. "James," said she, "these late hours do not agree with me. My situation must be considered. We will have supper at nine, and go to bed by ten, if not before."

"Certainly, my love, of course," said the hypocritically uxorious spouse. "Certainly, and you had better not get up soon. I will send your breakfast up-stairs, and you will be all the better for it. I will make you a draught to-night to compose you."

"Oh, I shall sleep soundly I have no doubt, for I am dreadfully tired, and I had not more than six hours in bed, you know, this morning, and really my situation requires attention."

"Certainly, my sweet Bessy, certainly it does; and therefore I will make you the draught. It will ensure you a good night's repose, and I shall take care that it is particu-

larly calculated for your situation. You had better take it. I will make it very pleasant."

"Well, I will, James, if you think it necessary. I am much obliged to you for proposing it, and you are so kind and attentive to me to-night, that is, so much more so than usual, that I am sure I shall be quite well in the morning. If it will not be troubling you, I should certainly like my breakfast sent up, but I am afraid you——"

"Don't think of trouble, my dear Bessy, nothing can be a trouble to me that is meant for you, my love." Here the doctor drew his chair close to that of his lady, and "looked unutterable things." He looked again, and sighed. He gently took her yielding hand in one of his, and tenderly clasped her waist with the other. "I am sure, my dear, I always mean to be kind to my own sweet Bessy. Really, my dear, you look so charming to-night, and so good-tempered, just as you used to look when I first——" Here the doctor was very uxorious indeed. He imprinted a fervid kiss upon the lady's unreluctant lips, and looked pleased with himself.

"Tell me, dearest Bessy," said he, "shall it

be — now don't laugh at me, and call me a fool, sweet Bessy — shall it be a boy?

“La! James, how should *I* know?”

“Well, dearest, don't you wish it may be?”

“Why yes, James, if it would please you.”

“It would please me, indeed. And don't you hope it may be like me?”

The lady was about to reply, but she checked herself. The doctor, observing this, said with some sprightliness, “Ah, I see you would. You won't say, but silence gives consent, you know. You look now just as you did when I first asked you to have me, Bessy. Then you placed your eyes on the ground, do you remember? But I must go and make the draught. I see you would wish him to be like me.”

The doctor took first a kiss, and then a candle, and departed, singing,

“I ganged wi' Jamie frae Dundee.”

The lady, when the door was shut, raised her drooping eyes, and ejaculated, “God forbid!” Then she seemed as if she had a cold chill down her back, and poked the fire.

The lady took her draught, placed her head in her night-cap, and her night-cap on the pillow. With James's hand in hers she went

soon to sleep. She had taken some thirty drops of laudanum, but she did not know that. She dreamed all sorts of things, a heterogeneous medley of incomprehensible and impossible events, in which nothing was distinct, but that the child was born, but it was not a boy, and decidedly not like James; everybody thought it was like somebody else, but that could not be, it was quite preposterous.

Her earnestness in denying the possibility awoke her. There was nothing in her hand. There was when she went asleep. She could not have dreamed *that*. Yet confused as she was, she might have done so, she would ask James. "James, James, how *sound* you sleep." She stretched forth her arm to jog him. There was no James there. That *was* strange. He certainly did go to bed, and she was positive his hand had been in hers, but now the hand was gone. *James* was gone too, and his part of the bed was *cold*, he had been gone some time. He must have been called up to attend some lady. Who could it be? It was kind of him not to disturb her. But who could it be? She would ring the bell, and ask Lissy if she knew ——"

The bell was rung. There was a bustle,

seemingly in Lissy's room. It sounded in that direction. There was a scramble, then it seemed as if something was put into, or on a hollow vessel, and there was a crash, followed by an ejaculation. She might be mistaken. Perhaps it was a strange cat got into the pantry. There was a beautiful large dish of milk, standing for cream. It must be that, as sure as fate every drop was spoiled or upset. She rang the bell again. The little doctor came, he appeared to come up-stairs from the lower part of the house, and inquired what was the matter?

"Why, where *have* you been to? What noise was that? How long have you been gone? Who wanted you? Why, have you not got a light?

Mr. Assington replied that he had only been down-stairs to the shop, to get a draught, because he was restless, and couldn't sleep. He had broken a bottle. He had not been gone a moment when the bell rang. He had put out the light when he broke the bottle; the latter and the candle fell down together.

"Thank Heaven! the milk is not spilled; I really thought it had been a cat in the pantry. Are you sure all is quite safe *there*?"

"Quite, my dear. Don't disturb yourself."

"Then come into bed. You must be cold. There, come in, and I'll cover you up. How cold you are; don't touch me, James, or I shall shiver. I shouldn't wonder a bit if you were to have the spasms. There, lie down, do. I'll tuck up your side. Lord a mercy, James, why your foot is quite wet, I declare, and you have put it against me. What *have* you put it into?"

James said he had spilled some water when he broke the bottle.

"Well there, go to sleep do. You're as cold as any frog."

The lady turned her back upon James and went asleep. The laudanum compelled her. James was up early. He assured his lady that her breakfast should be sent as soon as ready, and she took another nap. It was a long one, she thought when she awoke, and she wondered how it was that breakfast did not come. Then her thoughts reverted to the preceding events. It was strange James could not sleep. He generally slept well enough, indeed he was always asleep from the time he went to bed till he got up. There was no waking him. And how cold he was! And what a great noise there

was! And it did not *seem* to come from the shop, certainly. And his *foot*, too, how wet *that* was! It gave her quite a chill to think of it. And what a time they were getting breakfast! What noise was that? There was somebody at the piano. James, she thought, amusing himself, but he need not make so terrible a noise. Perhaps it was one of the children. If so, the piano would be spoiled, and it was only tuned last week. That five shillings would be thrown away. Did anybody ever hear such a thumping? James must be mad to suffer the children to go on so. She would get up, and see about it, that she would; and besides, it must be very late, she wanted her breakfast.

The lady got up, and quickly dressed herself. She descended the staircase. Thump, thump, thump, went the piano; and then there was a talking, as if somebody was giving instructions. It must be James teaching the eldest child her notes. She would go up and fetch her keys. She went up. Passing Lissy's door, which stood partly open, she just looked in. There was something broken; the pieces were scattered all over the floor. That *was* strange! Mrs. Assington thought of the wet foot, and had a chill indeed. She shuddered.

She went down stairs, to the door of the room whence came the strange sounds. It was closed. She peeped through the key-hole. There was the smiling wet-footed traitor seated on the music-stool, Lissy on his knee, and he teaching her the notes. Mrs. Assington declared afterwards, "You might have knocked her down with a feather." She listened.

"Lord! sir, I shall never learn to play as well as missus."

"Oh! yes, you will, Lissy; you get on very well, you see. I'll soon teach you to play as well as *she* does. You will learn quicker than *she* did. *She* is very slow. Hasn't *half* the abilities you have."

"Lord! sir, d'ye think so? How pleased I shall be! I don't think missus *is* particularly clever. I thinks if I had as good clothes as she, I should look as well as she, too."

"Better, my dear Lissy; she gets very ugly. And you shall have good clothes, too. When I get my property, you shall have anything you like."

"Lord! sir, that will be prime. How mad *she'd* be, if she knew it!"

"Oh! but you must be very careful, Lissy; if *she* found it out!"

“ Oh ! you needn't be afeard,” answered Lissy, “ I'll manage *her* — never mind, if I don't.”

The door seemed to move, as if pushed against.

“ What was that ?” asked the doctor, in great trepidation — “ What was that ?”

“ Lord ! sir, how frightened you be ! — only the wind, I s'pose.”

“ I'll see,” replied the doctor. He went to the door — opened it. He jumped higher and farther than ever he jumped. He screamed ; Lissy looked saucily. She seemed to grin defiance at her mistress. The doctor sank into a chair, and covered his head with his hands ; perhaps for the same reason that an ostrich hides its head in a hedge when hunted, thinking when the head is covered all must be hidden. The injured lady had witnessed this without saying a word. Her pride overcame her passion. She would not condescend to scold before the base wretch who had usurped her place. She merely said, “ I'm sorry I disturbed you, Mr. Assington ; perhaps, when you have finished your instructions, you would like breakfast. I will go and get it for you.” Thus saying, she retired.

The little doctor well-nigh fainted. The saucy Lissy laughed at him. She tried to cheer his drooping heart by a few encouraging smiles and expressions, but it was of no avail. The little doctor, at that moment, wished he had never seen Lissy. However, as that was more than he dared acknowledge, Lissy never guessed it. Finding that he was too much "cut up," as she termed it, by the recent discovery, she left him to his own pleasing reflections, and proceeded very leisurely to her duties in the kitchen. She took in the tray, and the kettle, asked her mistress if she should "call master," received an answer briefly affirmative, and did so.

The man who has been awakened from a troubled sleep by the entrance of a rude turn-key into his cell, to announce the approaching hour of his execution, may be enabled to conceive the delightful sensations which crowded upon the doctor when Lissy summoned him to breakfast. Scarcely knowing whither he was going he proceeded to the apartment where sat his injured lady in all the majesty of ineffable indignation. Once or twice he was tempted to flee from house, home, wife, and everything, that very instant, and put into

practice his plan of emigration ; but he had courage for nothing decisive. He entered the room, sat down, and put his hand to his forehead as if he had a headache, and groaned audibly.

The lady did not move or speak. She did not even look at him. This silence was terrible ! In what would it end ? His suspense was truly awful. A thought entered his head. He would endeavour to avert the coming hurricane. He would try to appease her wrath by kindness. But would it succeed ? There was the rub. Agitated between hope, fear, and a variety of agreeable emotions, he began officiously to do the duties of a polite husband at the breakfast-table.

He took the kettle in one hand, the tea-pot in the other ; he filled the latter till it poured over the hearth-rug, placed it on the fire, and the black kettle on the table. Perfectly unconscious that he had done anything *outré*, he proceeded to spread some butter on a plate, put that plate on another, and handed it to his wife, asking her with fear and trembling if she would like a slice of cold toast. The lady took the greasy piece of crockery, and

said nothing. She thought the more, however, and enjoyed the agony of her husband. His distress was clear. He was on the rack, and she was so far gratified. Still she remained silent and motionless, merely turning a sly glance at intervals towards her mate, to observe his trepidation and awkwardness.

Seeing that she was so much more placid than he had dared to hope, he tried to assume the appearance of making a breakfast, and to persuade her to do the same. He poured himself out a cup of hot-water, sweetened it, as he thought, with salt, and poured the milk into the sugar-basin. He then sipped his agreeable beverage, scalded his lips, and was nearly sick into the bargain. He started, exclaimed, spluttered, looked at his wife shamefacedly, then stared at the table, and the fire, and perceived, to his horror, the blunders he had committed.

“Dear me!” he said; “the teapot is absolutely burned to pieces!” And he was right, for the metal spout had dropped into the fire, and the black shining handle was gone to ashes. The teapot bore the aspect of a fat dog without nose or tail. The doctor was stupified with amazement.

"Bless my soul! dearest Bessy," he exclaimed in a tone of tender remonstrance, "why did you not tell me I had put the teapot on the fire?"

"I am no longer mistress of this house, Mr. Assington," the lady coolly replied, "and therefore can have no interest in its concerns."

"My only love," cried the little man, in a soft, insinuating tone, "why will you be so very severe? It was all a joke, you know; I only meant to teach her the piano a little, because she said she should like to play a tune or two; nothing more, my sweet love! — nothing more. Pray, take some breakfast; do, dearest! I am sure I buttered you a *nice* piece of toast. Why don't you eat it?"

"Oh! yes, the toast is excellent, I admit; pray, James, try a bit of it yourself."

The doctor was surprised at the goodnatured offer of his lady, and flattered himself that his coaxing tone and manner had comfortably settled the business without farther trouble. His heart was glad. He smiled assent, and his wife handed him the well-buttered plate. He was thunderstruck. The lady rose, and with considerable dignity and emphasis said—

"Mr. Assington, we have lived together too long. I do not wish to interfere with your pleasures; but, as it is clearly your intention that my servant shall usurp my place as mistress of this house, it cannot be expected that I should stay to witness her elevation, or to behold any more of your private gratifications than I have already seen. I shall take my children, and leave you to your enjoyments."

The lady was going to make a majestic exit, but the little man prevented her from doing so. He had certain misgivings. To be separated from his wife, and under such circumstances, was not quite the thing for a professional man, and one who upheld the dignity of his profession. What would the world say? And that was not all. He was dependent upon his mother-in-law for the greater part of his income. That lady was nearly related to his wife, and very fond of her—how might the allowance be affected? There was another rub.

"Whither do you intend to go?" he asked.

"To your mother-in-law's house."

"And will you tell *all*?"

"All—even about the *bottle* you broke last night."

The doctor was struck dumb with horror. He sank on his knees, and remained in silent torture clinging to his wife's petticoats for several minutes. The lady made many strenuous exertions to free herself from his grasp; but he still held fast by her drapery, and she, in her struggles for freedom, displayed more than we shall mention. The doctor's tongue was untied, and he became eloquent; he could not bear to lose his Bessy — she had never been more prized than he felt she was at that critical moment. He implored, he entreated — prayed: she was obdurate. He became furious — threatened to hang himself; said he never could live without her — he would not live; and then, to prove how sincere he was in this declaration, he took up the knife with which he had buttered the piece of "genuine stone china," and most industriously sawed his thick, starched neckcloth with the back of it. The lady smiled in bitter contempt, and sailed out of the room in all the pomp of scorn.

The doctor called, he called till his calls seemed as many screams; but he called in vain. Nobody came but Lissy, and she was the last person he wanted.

"Well," said Lissy, "what's the rumpus now, I wonder! What's the matter?"

"Your mistress is going to leave the house for ever, Lissy!"

"Lord, sir, you don't say so!" cried Lissy, in a tone that showed the lady's departure had not so many terrors for her as for her master—"well, that is a good un, hows'ever! You bayn't sorry for that, I 'spose."

"Why, Lissy, there are considerations. She will go to my mother-in-law, and I shall never get another shilling. What shall I do? Oh! Lissy, what shall I do?"

Lissy thought for a moment, and then said, in a cheering voice, "Come, come, get up; it's never no use at all to be kneeling there. Don't be in sich a fantigue, don't! Get up, and hear what I has to say."

The doctor derived comfort from Lissy's assured manner. He rose. Lissy took hold of his arm, and whispered privately and confidentially in his ear. The doctor got into a towering rage; he vowed death, fire, murder, and sundry other comforts.

"There, sir!" said the audacious Lissy, with a laugh of triumph—"there! I told you

you needn't be afeard! I said, says I, leave me alone to manage her! Tell her what I says,—she won't say a word."

The doctor went up-stairs, the doctor came down stairs; he was followed by his lady. Recrimination—recrimination. The lady denied: the doctor called Lissy. The lady got into a great passion, and ordered Lissy out of the room. Lissy stuck her red arms a-kimbo, and wouldn't move. The doctor's passion increased; he pelted his wife with Bell's Anatomy, the whole three volumes, one after another; the lady returned the compliment with first her thimble, then her scissors, and then her work-box.

After a storm comes a calm. The doctor was worn out by the various events of that morning, and the emotions to which they had given rise; he went out to "recruit his exhausted frame" by lounging on his garden-seat. Lissy gave the children their dinners, the doctor had a basin of broth in the kitchen, his wife sat sullenly fasting in the parlour, and Lissy made as hearty a meal as ever.

“OUR TOWN” IN AN UPROAR.

“Bella, horrida bella.”

SINCE I first came into “the town,” reader, I have never seen it so excited as it is now. Everybody is staring and talking, and talking and staring at each other, and to each other, as if they expected the world was going to be destroyed by a comet. The doctor “goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour;” but he is silent, he is in one of his “silent rages,” as Lord Byron termed such fits. The bold captain and the heroic lieutenant are scowling, and looking great deeds. They are whispering very busily that the emeralder knows nothing of nautical affairs, how could he? he was never at sea in his life, they say. “Revenge is sweet,” and they are enjoying it. But the people of “our town,” though they are willing to believe anything that may be said of the emeralder, because they look

upon him as a foreigner and an interloper, and chiefly because they remember the "laughing devil in his sneer" before mentioned, do not relish the captain's "gammon," as they call it. He is no longer sympathised with for being only a commander, they think that is too good for him. But they may not know anything about it, and therefore we will not form an estimation of his merits by their opinions.

Certes it is that something dreadful is contemplated. What can it be? Who can the object of the doctor's rage be? Is he going to set fire to his house, and burn his wife? Bang! There is the report of fire-arms. Mercy upon us! Here, Thomas, run and see what is the matter. No, stop, I'll go myself, this surprise is dreadful. Perhaps there is murder doing. Bang! again. Oh! yes, there must be murder—and oh! this tight boot—I shall be too late to see it. There, now it's on, but the other is the tightest of the two—pull, pull, pull, a long pull and a strong pull; it would require a team of horses to get it on; hang the boot, give me a shoe. Now I'm off, wait till I come back, reader.

Well, dear reader, thank Heaven!—dear me

how short my breath is—all the people's heads were out of the windows. Thank Heaven!—oh! what a run I had. Well, thank Heaven—everybody was running. Thank Heaven it's no worse. There is nobody killed as yet; the report of the fire-arms is caused by the little doctor who is practising with his old pistol against a wall; how it will end is a mystery. What foul tale could that false Lissy have whispered? Or is the little doctor to be the friend of any of the other belligerents. The report of the fire-arms has ceased. The captain, the lieutenant, and the doctor, are walking past my door arm in arm, talking mysteriously, and in a low tone. Their looks are dark, much I fear their thoughts are darker. Time will reveal all, and we must have patience. Dire mischance, I am going out for a week, and if there should be murder I shall not have the opportunity of seeing it. It is very hard to have one's pleasures always interrupted, but it is my invariable lot. Some people can enjoy themselves, but I never can.

Well, reader, I am returned, and will tell thee all the horrible doings of the last se'nnight. How dreadful is man's revenge. Who shall

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dare fathom the dark abyss of the human heart? Who shall dare attempt to pourtray the dark workings of the human mind. Alas! alas! The emerald hath fallen —

Hang the printer, and the printer's devil into the bargain, the former hath just sent the latter to say that there is not room for another paragraph, and ere I could finish the passage I was writing, I was compelled thus abruptly to break off. How sorry I am!

Dear reader, I hope we may meet again, that I may have the pleasure of telling thee the rest of this story, and many others; if not, if thou hast had enough of me and "Our Town," may all good fortune and the best health attend thee and thine for ever! May this life prove to thee only a smooth introduction to a better!

THE END.

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